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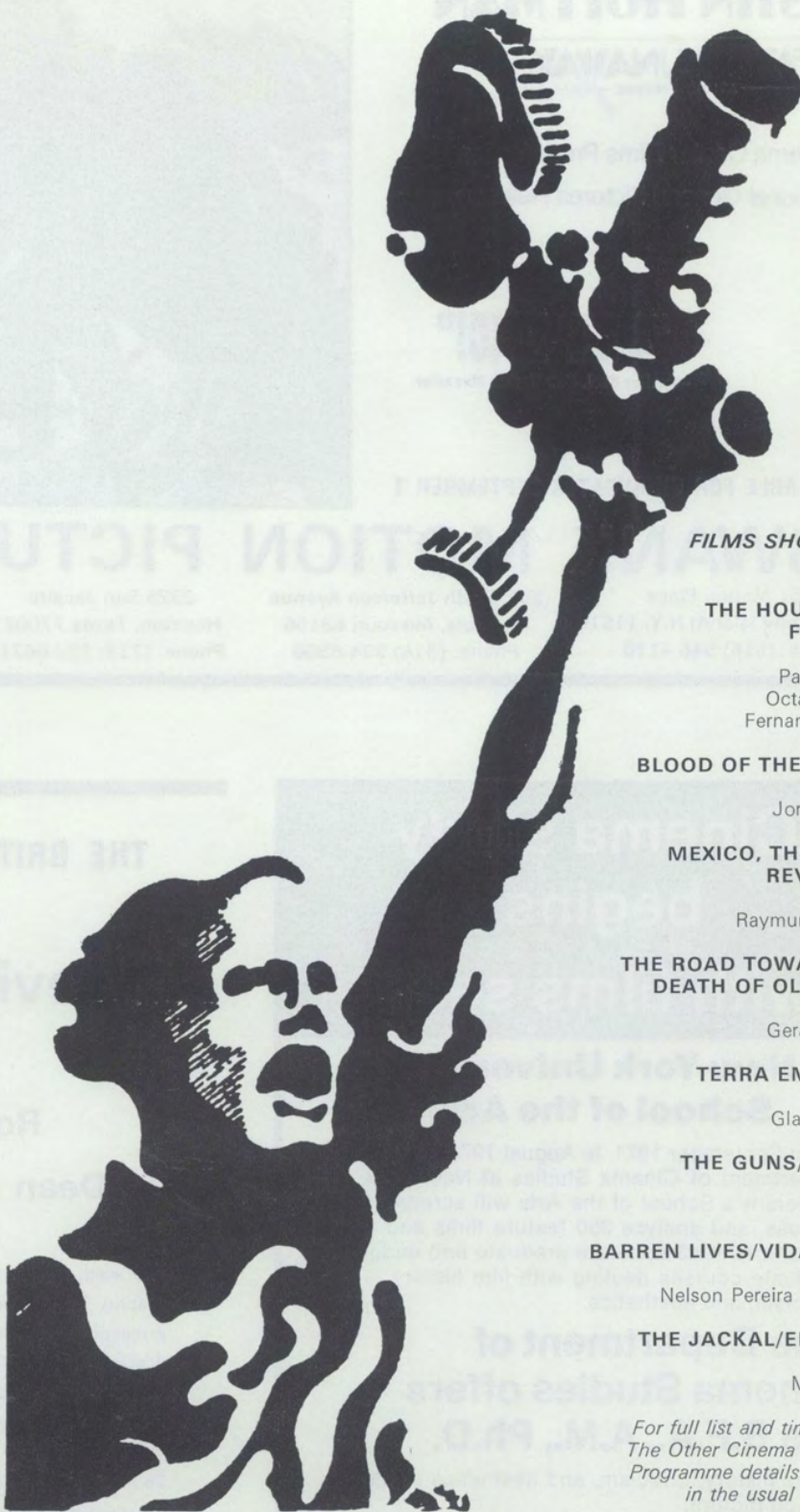
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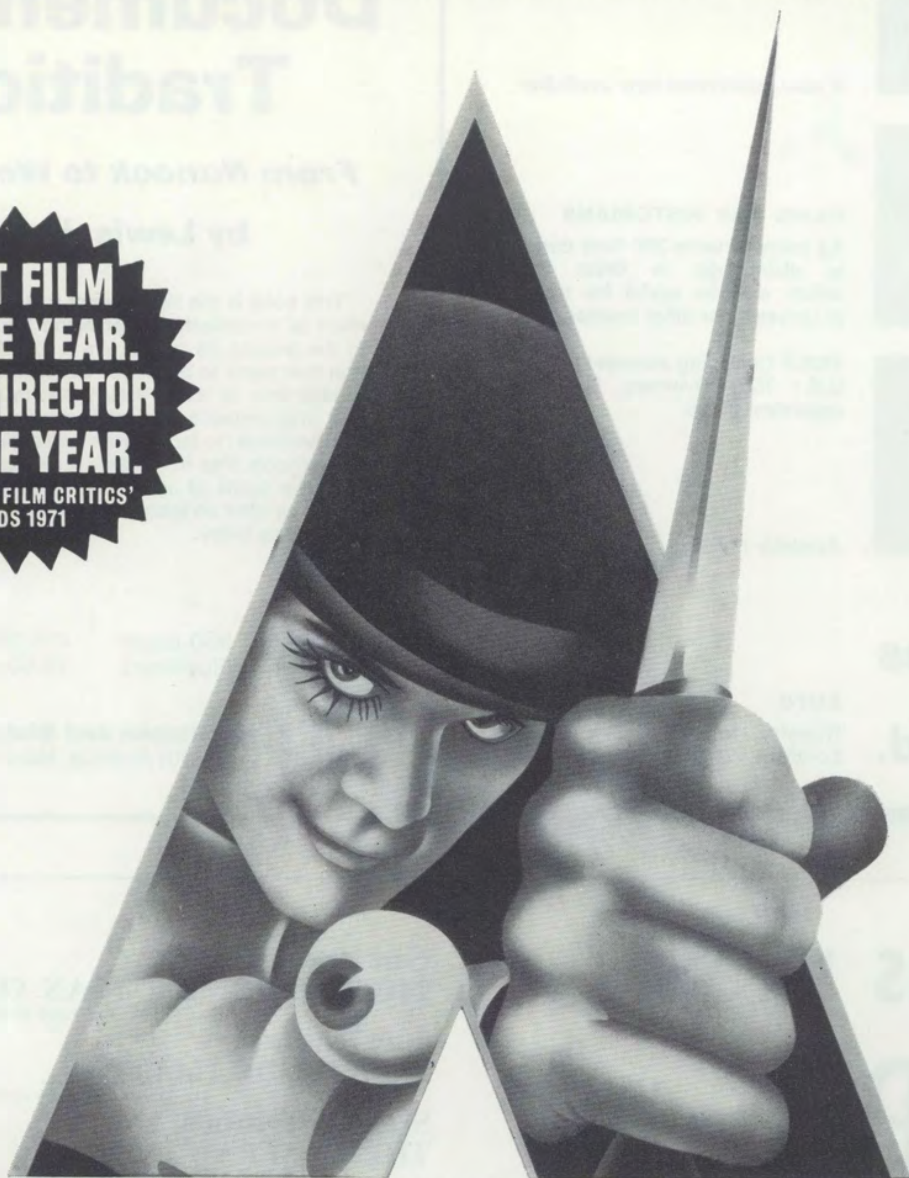
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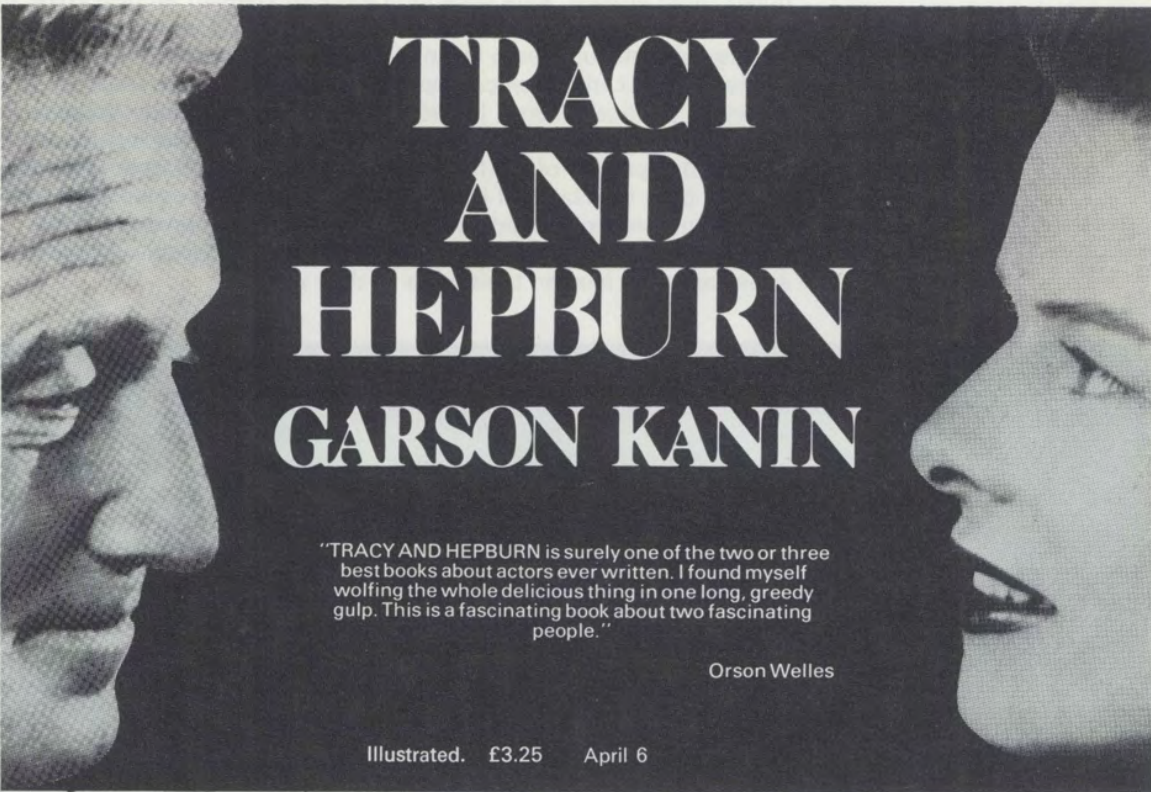
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Sight and Sound



International Film Quarterly

Spring 1972

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On the cover: Timothy Bottoms and Maggie Smith in Alan J. Pakula's 'The Widower'

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INTERVIEW WITH



STANLEY KUBRICK

Philip Strick and Penelope Houston

We met Kubrick last November at his home near Borehamwood, a casual labyrinth of studios, offices, and seemingly dual-purpose rooms in which family life and film-making overlap as though the one were unthinkable without the other. Despite his reputed aversion to the ordeals of interrogation, Kubrick proved an immensely articulate conversationalist, willing to talk out in detail any aspect, technical or theoretical, of his devotion to the cinema. When we came to transcribe our tapes, what indeed emerged was perhaps rather more of a conversation, covering a lot of ground, than a formal interview.

When *A Clockwork Orange* opened in London a few weeks later, Kubrick found himself in the front line of somebody else's war. The critics were up in arms about *Straw Dogs*, in particular, and *A Clockwork Orange* became caught in the crossfire, especially after the Home Secretary's much publicised visit to the film. It was an extraordinary fuss (the novel was, after all, first published ten years ago), the more so for seeming to be about a *Clockwork Orange* that

sounded like nothing much to do with the film Kubrick made. But it also meant that some of his replies to our original questions would have to be revised, to make due allowance for the arguments the film had caused. So what follows is to some extent a Kubrick rewrite of a Kubrick interview—in the interests, as always with Kubrick, of precision.

How closely did you work with Anthony Burgess in adapting *A Clockwork Orange* for the screen?

STANLEY KUBRICK: I had virtually no opportunity of discussing the novel with Anthony Burgess. He phoned me one evening when he was passing through London and we had a brief conversation on the telephone. It was mostly an exchange of pleasantries. On the other hand, I wasn't particularly concerned about this because in a book as brilliantly written as *A Clockwork Orange* one would have to be lazy not to be able to find the answers to any questions which might arise within the text of the novel itself. I think it is reasonable to say that, whatever Burgess had to say about the story was said in the book.

How about your own contributions to the story? You seem to have preserved the style and structure of the original far more closely than with most of your previous films, and the dialogues are often exactly the same as in the novel.

My contribution to the story consisted of writing the screenplay. This was principally a matter of selection and editing, though I did invent a few useful narrative ideas and reshape some of the scenes. However, in general, these contributions merely clarified what was already in the novel—such as the Cat Lady telephoning the police, which explains why the police appear at the end of that scene. In the novel, it occurs to Alex that she may have called them, but this is the sort of thing that you can do in a novel and not in the screenplay. I was also rather pleased with the idea of 'Singin' in the Rain' as a means of Alexander identifying Alex again towards the end of the film.

How did you come to use 'Singin' in the Rain' in the first place?

This was one of the more important ideas which arose during rehearsal. This scene, in fact, was rehearsed longer than any other scene in the film and appeared to be going nowhere. We spent three days trying to work out just what was going to happen and somehow it all seemed a bit inadequate. Then suddenly the idea popped into my head—I don't know where it came from or what triggered it off.

The main addition you seem to have made to the original story is the scene of Alex's introduction to the prison. Why did you feel this was important?

It may be the longest scene but I would not think it is the most important. It was a necessary addition because the prison sequence is compressed, in comparison with the novel, and one had to have something in it which gave sufficient weight to the idea that Alex was actually imprisoned. The routine of checking into prison which, in fact, is quite accurately presented in the film, seemed to provide this necessary weight.

In the book there is another killing by Alex while he is in prison. By omitting this, don't you run the risk of seeming to share Alex's own opinion of himself as a high-

spirited innocent?

I shouldn't think so, and Alex doesn't see himself as a high-spirited innocent. He is totally aware of his own evil and accepts it with complete openness.

Alex seems a far pleasanter person in the film than in the book...

Alex makes no attempt to deceive himself or the audience as to his total corruption and wickedness. He is the very personification of evil. On the other hand, he has winning qualities: his total candour, his wit, his intelligence and his energy; these are attractive qualities and ones, I might add, which he shares with Richard III.

The violence done to Alex in the brainwashing sequence is in fact more horrifying than anything he does himself...

It was absolutely necessary to give weight to Alex's brutality, otherwise I think there would be moral confusion with respect to what the government does to him. If he were a lesser villain, then one could say: 'Oh, yes, of course, he should not be given this psychological conditioning; it's all too horrible and he really wasn't that bad after all.' On the other hand, when you have shown him committing such atrocious acts, and you still realise the immense evil on the part of the government in turning him into something less than human in order to make him good, then I think the essential moral idea of the book is clear. It is necessary for man to have choice to be good or evil, even if he chooses evil. To deprive him of this choice is to make him something less than human—a clockwork orange.

But aren't you inviting a sort of identification with Alex?

I think, in addition to the personal qualities I mentioned, there is the basic psychological, unconscious identification with Alex. If you look at the story not on the social and moral level, but on the psychological dream content level, you can regard Alex as a creature of the id. He is within all of us. In most cases, this recognition seems to bring a kind of empathy from the audience, but it makes some people very angry and uncomfortable. They are unable to accept this view of themselves and, therefore, they become angry at the film. It's a bit like the King who kills the messenger who brings him bad news and rewards the one who brings him good news.

The comparison with Richard III makes a striking defence against accusations that the film encourages violence, delinquency and so on. But as Richard is a safely distant historical figure, does it meet them completely?

There is no positive evidence that violence in films or television causes social violence. To focus one's interest on this aspect of violence is to ignore the principal causes, which I would list as:

1. Original sin: the religious view.
2. Unjust economic exploitation: the Marxist view.
3. Emotional and psychological frustration: the psychological view.
4. Genetic factors based on the 'Y' chromosome theory: the biological view.
5. Man—the killer ape: the evolutionary view.

To try to fasten any responsibility on art as the cause of life seems to me to have the case put the wrong way around. Art consists of

reshaping life but it does not create life, or cause life. Furthermore to attribute powerful suggestive qualities to a film is at odds with the scientifically accepted view that, even after deep hypnosis, in a post-hypnotic state, people cannot be made to do things which are at odds with their natures.

Is there any kind of violence in films which you might regard as socially dangerous?

Well, I don't accept that there is a connection, but let us hypothetically say that there might be one. If there were one, I should say that the kind of violence that might cause some impulse to emulate it is the 'fun' kind of violence: the kind of violence we see in the Bond films, or the Tom and Jerry cartoons. Unrealistic violence, sanitised violence, violence presented as a joke. This is the only kind of violence that could conceivably cause anyone to wish to copy it, but I am quite convinced that not even this has any effect.

There may even be an argument in support of saying that any kind of violence in films, in fact, serves a useful social purpose by allowing people a means of vicariously freeing themselves from the pent up, aggressive emotions which are better expressed in dreams, or in the dreamlike state of watching a film, than in any form of reality or sublimation.

Isn't the assumption of your audience in the case of *Clockwork Orange* likely to be that you support Alex's point of view and in some way assume responsibility for it?

I don't think that any work of art has a responsibility to be anything but a work of art. There obviously is a considerable controversy, just as there always has been, about what is a work of art, and I should be the last to try to define that. I was amused by Cocteau's *Orphée* when the poet is given the advice: 'Astonish me'. The Johnsonian definition of a work of art is also meaningful to me, and that is that a work of art must either make life more enjoyable or more endurable. Another quality, which I think forms part of the definition, is that a work of art is always exhilarating and never depressing, whatever its subject matter may be.

In view of the particular exhilaration of Alex's religious fantasies, has the film run into trouble with clerical critics?

The reaction of the religious press has been mixed, although a number of superb reviews have been written. One of the most perceptive reviews by the religious press, or any other press, appeared in the *Catholic News* written by John E. Fitzgerald, and I would like to quote one portion of it:

'In print we've been told (in B. F. Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*) that man is but a grab-bag of conditioned reflexes. On screen with images rather than words, Stanley Kubrick shows that man is more than a mere product of heredity and/or environment. For as Alex's clergyman friend (a character who starts out as a fire-and-brimstone-spouting buffoon but ends up the spokesman for the film's thesis) says: "When a man cannot choose, he ceases to be a man".

'The film seems to say that to take away a man's choice is not to redeem but merely restrain him: otherwise we have a society of oranges, organic but operating like clockwork. Such brainwashing, organic and psychological, is a weapon that totalitarians in state, church or society might wish for an easier good even at the cost of individual



Alex (Malcolm McDowell) in the Chelsea Drugstore sequence, shot with a 9.8 mm wide angle lens.

rights and dignity. Redemption is a complicated thing and change must be motivated from within rather than imposed from without if moral values are to be upheld. But Kubrick is an artist rather than a moralist and he leaves it to us to figure what's wrong and why, what should be done and how it should be accomplished.'

Your choice of lenses for the shooting of the film often gives it a subtly distorted visual quality. Why did you want that particular look?

It may sound like an extremely obvious thing to say, but I think it is worth saying nevertheless that when you are making a film, in addition to any higher purpose you may have in mind, you must be interesting; visually interesting, narratively interesting, interesting from an acting point of view. All ideas for creating interest must be held up against the yardstick of the theme of the story, the narrative requirements and the purpose of the scene; but, within that, you must make a work of art interesting. I recall a comment recorded in a book called *Stanislavski Directs*, in which Stanislavski told an actor that he had the right understanding of the character, the right understanding of the text of the play, that what he was doing was completely believable, but

that it was still no good because it wasn't interesting.

Were you looking after the hand-held camera for the fight with the Cat Lady?

Yes, all of the hand-held camerawork is mine. In addition to the fun of doing the shooting myself, I find it is virtually impossible to explain what you want in a hand-held shot to even the most talented and sensitive camera operator.

To what extent do you rationalise a shot before setting it up?

There are certain aspects of a film which can meaningfully be talked about, but photography and editing do not lend themselves to verbal analysis. It's very much the same as the problem one has talking about painting, or music. The questions of taste involved and the decision-making criteria are essentially non-verbal, and whatever you say about them tends to read like the back of a record album. These are decisions that have to be made every few minutes during the shooting, and they are just down to the director's taste and imagination.

How did you come to choose the Purcell piece—the 'Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary'?

Well, this answer is going to sound a lot like the last one. You're in an area where

words are not particularly relevant. In thinking about the music for the scene, the Purcell piece occurred to me and, after I listened to it several times in conjunction with the film, there was simply no question about using it.

The arrangements by Walter Carlos are extraordinarily effective . . .

I think that Walter Carlos has done something completely unique in the field of electronic realisation of music—that's the phrase that they use. I think that I've heard most of the electronic and *musique concrète* LPs there are for sale in Britain, Germany, France, Italy and the United States; not because I particularly like this kind of music, but out of my researches for 2001 and *Clockwork Orange*. I think Walter Carlos is the only electronic composer and realiser who has managed to create a sound which is not an attempt at copying the instruments of the orchestra and yet which, at the same time, achieves a beauty of its own employing electronic tonalities. I think that his version of the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony rivals hearing a full orchestra playing it, and that is saying an awful lot.

There is very little post-synchronisation for the dialogue . . .

There is no post-synchronisation. I'm quite pleased about this because every scene was shot on location; even the so-called sets that we built which were, in fact, built in a factory about 40 feet off the noisy High Street in Borehamwood, a few hundred yards from the old M-G-M Studio. Despite this, we were able to get quite acceptably clean soundtracks.

With the modern equipment that's available today in the form of microphones, radio transmitters and so forth, it should be possible to get a usable soundtrack almost anywhere. In the scene where the tramp recognises Alex who is standing looking at the Thames, next to the Albert Bridge, there was so much traffic noise on the location that you had to shout in order to be heard, but we were able to get such a quiet soundtrack that it was necessary to add street noise in the final mix to make it realistic. We used a microphone the size of a paper clip, and it was secured with black tape on the tramp's scarf. In several shots you can see the microphone, but you don't know what you are looking at.

In concentrating on the action of the film, as you do, isn't there a danger that the lesser characters may appear rather one-dimensional?

The danger of everything that you do in a film is that it may not work, it may be boring, or bland, or stupid . . .

When you think of the greatest moments of film, I think you are almost always involved with images rather than scenes, and certainly never dialogue. The thing a film does best is to use pictures with music and I think these are the moments you remember. Another thing is the way an actor did something: the way Emil Jannings took out his handkerchief and blew his nose in *The Blue Angel*, or those marvellous slow turns that Nikolai Cherkassov did in *Ivan the Terrible*.

How did you manage the subjective shot of Alex's suicide attempt?

We bought an old Newman Sinclair clockwork mechanism camera (no pun intended) for £50. It's a beautiful camera

In slow motion, Alex hurls his rebellious droogs into the river. Filmed at Thamesmead.



and it's built like a battleship. We made a number of polystyrene boxes which gave about 18 inches of protection around the camera, and cut out a slice for the lens. We then threw the camera off a roof. In order to get it to land lens first, we had to do this six times and the camera survived all six drops. On the final one, it landed right on the lens and smashed it but it didn't do a bit of harm to the camera. This, despite the fact that the polystyrene was literally blasted away from it each time by the impact. The next day we shot a steady test on the camera and found there wasn't a thing wrong with it. On this basis, I would say that the Newman Sinclair must be the most indestructible camera ever made.

How much planning do you do before you start to shoot a scene?

As much as there are hours in the day, and days in the weeks. I think about a film almost continuously. I try to visualise it and

arrive on the location, the crew is standing around eating buns and drinking tea, waiting to be told what to do. You've got to keep them outside the room you're rehearsing in and take whatever time is necessary to get everything right, and have it make sense. There's no way to define what this process consists of. It obviously has to do with taste and imagination and it is in this crucial period of time that a film is really created. Once you know you've got something worthwhile, the shooting becomes a matter of recording (improving if you can) what you have already done in rehearsal. Whatever problems exist during the actual shooting are not the kind of problems that worry me. If the actor isn't getting it right, well, he'll get it right eventually. If the camera operator spoils a shot, it can be done again. The thing that can never be changed, and the thing that is the make or break of a picture, are those few hours you spend alone

lighting and so forth, but he made great films. His films will probably last longer than anyone else's. You could say that Chaplin was no style and all content. On the other hand, the opposite can be seen in Eisenstein's films, who is all style and no content or, depending on how generous you want to be, little content. Many of Eisenstein's films are really quite silly; but they are so beautifully made, so brilliantly cinematic, that, despite their heavily propagandistic simplemindedness, they become important. Obviously, if you can combine style and content, you have the best of all possible films.

Do you have a preference for any one aspect of the whole film-making process?

I think I enjoy editing the most. It's the nearest thing to some reasonable environment in which to do creative work. Writing, of course, is very satisfying, but, of course, you're not working with film. The actual shooting of a film is probably the worst circumstances you could try to imagine for creating a work of art. There is, first of all, the problem of getting up very early every morning and going to bed very late every night. Then there is the chaos, confusion and frequently physical discomfort. It would be, I suppose, like a writer trying to write a book while working at a factory lathe in temperatures which range from 95 to -10 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition to this, of course, editing is the only aspect of the cinematic art that is unique. It shares no connection with any other art form: writing, acting, photography, things that are major aspects of the cinema, are still not unique to it, but editing is.

How long did the editing take on *Clockwork Orange*?

The editing up to the point of dubbing took about six months, working seven days a week.

Do you ever have problems cutting out your own material?

When I'm editing, I'm only concerned with the questions of 'Is it good or bad?' 'Is it necessary?' 'Can I get rid of it?' 'Does it work?' My identity changes to that of an editor. I am never concerned with how much difficulty there was to shoot something, how much it cost and so forth. I look at the material with completely different eyes. I'm never troubled losing material. I cut everything to the bone. When you're shooting, you want to make sure that you don't miss anything and you cover it as fully as time and budget allow. When you're editing, you want to get rid of everything that isn't essential.

How much support coverage do you shoot?

There's always a conflict between time, money and quality. If you shoot a lot of coverage, then you must either spend a lot of money, or settle for less quality of performance. I find that when I'm shooting a scene where the acting is primarily important, I shoot a lot of takes but I don't try to get a lot of coverage from other angles. I try to shoot the scene as simply as possible to get the maximum performance from the actors without presenting them with the problem of repeating the performance too many times from different angles. On the other hand, in an action scene, where it's relatively easy to shoot, you want lots and lots of angles so that you can do something interesting with it in the cutting room.



The Minister of the Interior (Anthony Sharp) visits the prison.

I try to work out every conceivable variation of ideas which might exist with respect to the various scenes, but I have found that when you finally come down to the day the scene is going to be shot and you arrive on the location with the actors, having had the experience of already seeing some scenes shot, somehow it's always different. You find out that you have not really explored the scene to its fullest extent. You may have been thinking about it incorrectly, or you may simply not have discovered one of the variations which now in context with everything else that you have shot is simply better than anything you had previously thought of. The reality of the final moment, just before shooting, is so powerful that all previous analysis must yield before the impressions you receive under these circumstances, and unless you use this feedback to your positive advantage, unless you adjust to it, adapt to it and accept the sometimes terrifying weaknesses it can expose, you can never realise the most out of your film.

How do you usually work when you get to the reality of the final moment?

Whenever I start a new scene, the most important thing in my mind is, within the needs of the theme and the scene, to make something happen worth putting on film. The most crucial part of this comes when you start rehearsals on a new scene. You

in the actual place with the actors, with the crew outside drinking their tea.

Sometimes you find that the scene is absolutely no good at all. It doesn't make sense when you see it acted. It doesn't provide the necessary emotional or factual information in an interesting way, or in a way which has the right weight to it. Any number of things can suddenly put you in a position where you've got nothing to shoot. The only thing you can say about a moment like this is that it's better to realise it while you still have a chance to change it and to create something new, than it is to record for ever something that is wrong. This is the best and the worst time: it is the time you have your most imaginative ideas, things that have not occurred to you before, regardless of how much you've thought about the scene. It's also the time when you can stand there and feel very dumb and unhappy with what you're seeing, and not have the faintest idea of what to do about it.

Do you very consciously favour a particular style of shooting?

If something is really happening on the screen, it isn't crucial how it's shot. Chaplin had such a simple cinematic style that it was almost like *I Love Lucy*, but you were always hypnotised by what was going on, unaware of the essentially non-cinematic style. He frequently used cheap sets, routine

Do you direct actors in every detail, or do you expect them to some extent to come up with their own ideas?

I come up with the ideas. That is essentially the director's job. There is a misconception, I think, about what directing actors means: it generally goes along the lines of the director imposing his will over difficult actors, or teaching people who don't know how to act. I try to hire the best actors in the world. The problem is comparable to one a conductor might face. There's little joy in trying to get a magnificent performance from a student orchestra. It's difficult enough to get one with all the subtleties and nuances you might want out of the greatest orchestra in the world. You want to have great virtuoso soloists, and so with actors. Then it's not necessary to teach them how to act or to discipline them or to impose your will upon them because there is usually no problem along those lines. An actor will almost always do what you want him to do if he is able to do it; and, therefore, since great actors are able to do almost anything, you find you have few problems. You can then concentrate on what you want them to do, what is the psychology of the character, what is the purpose of the scene, what is the story about? These are things that are often muddled up and require simplicity and exactitude. The director's job is to provide the actor with ideas, not to teach him how to act or to trick him into acting. There's no way to give an actor what he hasn't got in the form of talent. You can give him ideas, thoughts, attitudes. The actor's job is to create emotion. Obviously, the actor may have some ideas too, but this is not what his primary responsibility is. You can make a mediocre actor less mediocre, you can make a terrible actor mediocre, but you cannot go very far without the magic. Great performances come from the magical talent of the actor, plus the ideas of the director.

The other part of the director's job is to exercise taste: he must decide whether what he is seeing is interesting, whether it's appropriate, whether it is of sufficient weight, whether it's credible. These are decisions that no one else can make.

You made what might seem some unusual casting choices for your last two films—how do you find the actors you want?

Well, that really comes down to a question of taste, doesn't it? A lot of pictures are cast by producers and their decisions are frequently based on proven success rather than unproven hints at talent. Many producers aren't willing to decide whether an actor who is unknown and who has done very little work is really good. I have nothing against people of proven talent, but sometimes there may be no one in that category who is right for the part.

Do you enjoy working with different actors? With a few exceptions—Peter Sellers, for instance—you haven't often used the same actor twice, unlike a lot of directors who obviously prefer to build up a sort of stock company of people who know their work.

I don't really think in those terms. I try to choose the best actors for the parts, whether I know them or not. I would avoid actors who have reputations for being destructive and neurotic but, other than that, there is no one whom I would not consider using for a part. . .



Alex's return home, to Mum, Dad and the lodger: Sheila Raynor, Clive Francis, Malcolm McDowell, Philip Stone.



The last sequence: Alex in hospital, with the Minister in attendance.

The only thing that is really important in your relationship with actors is that they must know that you admire them, that you admire their work, and there's no way to fake that. You must really admire them or you shouldn't use them. If they know that you admire their work, which they can sense in a thousand different ways, it doesn't really matter what you think of each other or what you say to them, or whether you are terribly friendly or not. The thing they care about is their work. Some actors are very amusing and pleasant and always cheerful. They are, of course, more pleasant to have around than those who are morose, vacant or enigmatic. But how they behave when you're not shooting has very little to do with what happens when the camera turns over.

You made *Clockwork Orange* initially because you had to postpone your Napoleon project. How do you see the Napoleon film developing?

First of all, I start from the premise that there has never been a great historical film, and I say that with all apologies and respect to those who have made historical films, including myself. I don't think anyone has ever successfully solved the problem of dealing in an interesting way with the historical information that has to be conveyed, and at the same time getting a sense

of reality about the daily life of the characters. You have to get a feeling of what it was like to be with Napoleon. At the same time, you have to convey enough historical information in an intelligent, interesting and concise way so that the audience understands what happened.

Would you include Abel Gance's *Napoleon* in this verdict?

I think I would have to. I know that the film is a masterpiece of cinematic invention and it brought cinematic innovations to the screen which are still being called innovations whenever someone is bold enough to try them again. But on the other hand, as a film about Napoleon, I have to say I've always been disappointed in it.

Did you think of *Clockwork Orange* as being in any way a form of relaxation between two very big films?

I don't think in terms of big movies, or small movies. Each movie presents problems of its own and has advantages of its own. Each movie requires everything that you have to give it, in order to overcome the artistic and logistic problems that it poses. There are advantages in an epic film, just as there are disadvantages. It is much easier to do a huge crowd scene and make it interesting than it is to film a man sitting at a table thinking.

IN THE PICTURE



The Case of Karoly Makk

The surprise and success of a good, wise and accomplished film, *Love*, reminded Western critics that long ago there was another director called Károly Makk, who made one or two of the best Hungarian films of the 1950s and then apparently vanished. If the two Makks were one and the same, they concluded, he must by now be a somewhat ancient man...

In fact he is one and the same, and not at all ancient. An exact contemporary of Jancsó, at 46 Makk is notably youthful, bouncy, amiable and less inclined, he congratulates himself (close colleagues say he is mistaken) to the impetuous temper of his younger days. His film career stretches back considerably further than his first feature success, *Liliomfi*, made in 1954. Ten years earlier, at eighteen, he was assistant on an experimental, expressionist film, *2 x 2*, which starred a prominent fascist actor, László Szillassy. After the Liberation he found himself working once again on the same film, which had come into the hands of the Peasant Party. 'We cut out all the bits with Szillassy—though not where he was in shadow or rear view—and reshot the scenes with Zoltan Varkonyi. The resulting picture was a terrible flop.'

Whilst working on the first version of *2 x 2* Makk came to know such leftish film-makers as István Szöts and László Ránody; and it was Ránody who recommended the energetic youngster to the Peasant Party. Enrolling in the Budapest Academy of Dramatic and Film Art, he had as his professor Géza Radványi. Along with Felix Mariassy, Makk was an assistant on Radványi's most celebrated film, the neo-realist *Some-where in Europe*, scripted by Béla Bálázs.

On graduation from the Academy Makk, with Imre Feher,

was assigned to the newsreel studios. When he quarrelled with the manager, however, he was sent off to work on a farm. After six months' ploughing, he had a stroke of luck in summer 1950 when Felix Mariassy, then shooting his second film, was taken ill, but said he could finish the picture with Makk as assistant. After this assignment Makk made a couple of shorts (*Cabal and Love*; *The Trained Patient*) and was co-director with Zoltán Fábri on *Signs of Life* and with Zoltán Varkonyi on his best picture, an adaptation of Tibor Déry's *Ményhert Simon*.

At last in 1954, at the age of 28, Makk made his first feature film, *Liliomfi*, which was a significant stage in the Hungarian cinema's progress out of the dogma of Socialist Realism in having no message except delight. Makk attributes its success to a youthful innocence of either discipline or inhibition. After eighteen years

this mixture of Biedermeyer operetta and *commedia dell'arte* seems only a little overlong. Makk's admirable comedy timing, his witty take-off of operetta conventions and his gentle, observant vision of human relationship have survived intact.

With the impetus of *Liliomfi*, Makk went on to make two films in quick succession. *Ward No. 9* was intended to expose errors of the Stalinist period through specific criticism of hospital services. Perhaps it was a style to which Hungarian film-makers were still unused; people who have seen it recently say that it has crumbled somewhat, while Makk himself feels that the intentions exceeded the execution, and likes only isolated scenes in a once praised film. In *Tale of the Twelve Points* he again indulged his deft talent for comedy with a story of a group of people led astray by optimistic expectations of a football pools win.

After 1956 ('a disastrous trauma in the life of our country... As long as my generation makes films, '56 will appear in some way or another'), he began work on the film that remains, with *Love*, his best, *The House Under the Rocks*. Imre Feher had taken the story to András Kovács, then head of the scenario department; but Kovács decided it was more suitable for Makk. Makk responded to it eagerly: his favourite subjects have always been those involving only two or three people caught up in some insoluble situation where there are no villains and where each character is in the right. 'I like situations in which details are important; where the character, his environment, political and other outside circumstances are indivisible. The more hopeless and insoluble the situation in which they are, the more fascinated I am and the more anxious to see what means of escape they will find.'

Until *Love*, then, *House Under the Rocks* was his most ideal subject: the story of a peasant whose marriage is threatened by

the jealous affection of his sister-in-law, it is treated with intensity and a minute observation of psychological detail. Makk's pre-eminently human approach seems to have saved *Brigade No. 39*, made for the anniversary of the 1919 Hungarian Republic, though the director himself regrets the film's over-all 'monumental' approach.

In the 1960s he made seven films, none of which aroused critical enthusiasm; film-making alternated with long intervals of inactivity. Makk, it seems, is vulnerable to discouragement. *Don't Keep off the Grass* (1960) was a promising comic idea about a Minister obliged to fulfil his show-off promise to a workman's large family, 'If you don't get a flat you shall share mine!' But the film suffered from production pressures and forced revisions. *The Fanatics* (1961), viciously attacked at the time, is a much undervalued film, a precursor of the whole group of Hungarian films of the later 1960s which show individuals of originality and enterprise—in this case it is an irrigation engineer—at odds with bureaucracy. A dreadful ending, with a *deus ex machina* minister, does not invalidate the intelligence and genuine criticism of what has gone before.

Hungarian critics were even harder on Makk's next two films, *Lost Paradise* (1962) and *The Last But One* (1963), apparently on the grounds that they were too schematic. After a lengthy interval he was persuaded to return to costume comedy; but Makk himself seems to have liked *His Majesty's Dates* even less than his critics and admits to having been totally disillusioned after it.

He made television films, and took over a disastrous Hungarian-Romanian co-production, *A Cloudless Holiday*, from Frigyes Ban. Part of the bargain was that he would then be allowed to make *Before God and Man*, in which he felt he had a subject as good as *House Under the Rocks*: the dramatic tragedy of a family of

Károly Makk on the set of 'Love'





Altman's 'Images': a face in the mirror.

Greeks who have stayed in Hungary after the war. Despite a lot of enthusiasm and energy the picture was badly received. By the end of the Sixties and the start of work on *Love* his morale had suffered severe shocks.

In fact he had had the script of *Love* for five years. Since *Ményhert Simon* he had remained friendly with Tibor Déry. Déry resisted his proposal that the two short stories *Love* (written in 1956) and *Two Women* (1963) could be combined into a single screenplay, arguing that the two heroines were very different; but Makk persisted and gave Déry a crash course in movies. Often the septuagenarian writer would take with him to the cinema his friend György Lukacs, the great Marxist philosopher. The two old gentlemen liked neo-realism, loved *The Gold Rush*, but walked out of Resnais. After six months, Déry unexpectedly telephoned Makk and announced that he had written a script.

From this beginning, writer and director worked together to arrive at the final screenplay, which gave Makk his most substantial critical success since *House Under the Rocks* and re-established his international reputation. Success is clearly his best stimulus. Currently he is directing a play about Rákosi for French TV; after this he will direct *Cat and Mouse Play*, whose basic situation of two aged sisters corresponding in partially mendacious letters (recalling the *Two Women* part of *Love*) sounds well suited to his plot preferences and his comic and kindly vision.

DAVID ROBINSON

Altman's Images

Robert Altman was in London in February, cutting his new film, *Images*. To help audiences to stop thinking of him as the man who made *M*A*S*H* (and to forestall their indignation when it turns out not to be exactly funny), it will probably be publicised as 'the story of a woman who loved her husband more than she loved herself and therefore murdered him.' But probably is the operative word.

Images is not yet finished, and Altman, who is unusually insistent on the organic nature of film ('It's like a child, it's like anything that's growing. If you start trying to restrict it, you have a twisted thing'), is particularly reluctant to outline the shape of the film to come.

He admits that when *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* was at the same stage, he was willing, and indeed eager, to describe it to anyone who was interested, whereas he feels that any summary of *Images* is bound to be misleading. 'Which is probably the best indication I have that it may be a good film. Who was it, when he was asked for a synopsis of his book, said "If I could have written it shorter, I would have done it"?'

In view of his method of working, Altman's cautious reticence seems particularly sensible. He explains that he usually starts out with an idea of the *kind* of picture he wants to make rather than with a precise story and that this idea is apt to be considerably modified by the collaborative process of film-making ('The hidden artists—there are a lot of them whose faces you never see—who work on a picture'). A case in point is one of the few sequences in *Images* about which he was prepared to be both specific and enthusiastic.

'In the script and in the shooting and in the performance, it was the most singularly clever sequence in the picture. I shot forever on it. The people who worked with me had never known me use so much film. I was like George Stevens. I shot a close-up from this angle, a close-up from that angle. It was about a six or seven minute scene. I even shot a master shot. I shot a short master, a tight master . . . I shot it so many different ways that René Auberjonois got sick eating spaghetti and everyone else just got sick of the scene. Then there was a problem and I thought we'd have to throw it out of the picture, but because of all that coverage we were able to put together an entirely different scene that I must say really works now.' Less than a week after I interviewed him, he

telephoned to say that he'd cut a further 23 minutes out of the film, including the sequence he'd mentioned and which he now felt didn't work at all.

Altman says that the only thematic continuity he can find in his films is a preoccupation with the flexible boundary between sanity and insanity. When asked to define his initial idea for *Images*, he cautiously admits that it's 'about a woman who's insane, or at least has all the manifestations of insanity and schizophrenia.' In view of his reputation for realistic detail and his origins in industrial documentaries, he's very anxious to prevent his audience viewing the film as a clinical documentary about insanity, insisting that—like all his films, including *M*A*S*H*—it's very much a fairytale.

To underline its fairytale aspect, and to break away from the specifically American connotations of his last three films, he spent months searching for a suitable location, 'looking for an environment which didn't exist.' Stockholm, Spain, Northern France and Canada were all considered before he settled on a remote old house in Ireland; though from what you see on the screen, he insists, you'd have no idea where the film took place. His characters' clothes were chosen to avoid suggesting too precise a period. To ensure the kind of spatial dislocation he was after ('we were trying not to pin it down to the mathematician returning to Cornwall with his wife to live'), he deliberately made his cast of six as international as possible: Susannah York (English) is married to René Auberjonois (American), while the two lovers who haunt her imaginings are played by Michel Bozzuffi (French) and Hugh Millais (Canadian).

'In *M*A*S*H*, we tried to give the audience the feeling that what they were seeing was just the window they were stuck at. That if they'd looked out another window, they'd have seen a different movie, though with the same atmosphere. In *Images*, you don't see anybody. When she drives to the railway station, there are some people, but

you won't see them. You don't see any other cars, you don't see telegraph poles . . . The idea is that we are dealing totally with the framework of someone's imagination. And when you have a dream, and you walk into a room, the only thing that's happening in that room is what's important to your dream. There are no rubber bands on the floor, no cigarette butts; there's just the gun in the corner, or the milk bottle on the table.'

The imagination that *Images* is describing is a violent one, and Altman admits that there's a great deal of blood in the three classic murder situations he depicts: a man shot with a shotgun at point blank range; another man stabbed in the neck while taking off his sweater; a third person driven off a cliff down a waterfall. But although the murders will be shown in graphic detail (unless, of course, he decides to cut them too), he insists that they'll convey no sense of realism, since in defiance of screen tradition he has chosen to show the violence as it affects its victims without indicating any intention on the part of the person perpetrating it.

Like his last three films, *Images* will be in Panavision ('a more natural look than most of the other lenses') and in colour ('I just don't see the world in black and white. It isn't real'). Yet Altman, who claims that he uses a zoom lens almost all the time but seldom uses the zoom part, and who is unperturbed at the prospect of filling a wide screen with a six-character fairytale, owns to a terror of wide angle lenses: 'There's a distortion to it, and I really don't like distortion. Vilmos [Zsigmond] made some fill-in shots of the house for *Images*. I'd told him to go out and surprise me. And they pan up from the lake to the house, and the house is all out of proportion and I just hate it. Yet it fits in the picture now so well that I'm embarrassed.'

While talking about *Images*, and reminiscing about *Brewster McCloud* ('the best picture I've made'), Altman is already thinking out his next two films: one, about a young person floundering about



Robert Altman on the set

in an alien environment, which he doesn't want to discuss in case he changes his mind in twenty minutes time; and *Thieves Like Us*, set in America in 1936 or 37 and 'kind of the son of *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*.' He says that since he's decided he really enjoys working, he's given up believing that every picture has to be important. 'I think that you just keep working, and you can do little paintings, and big ones, and then you can do a mural if you want to, and then go back to little ones.' Where will *Images* fit into this scheme of things? 'It's a small canvas, but I think it's going to look very nice hanging up some place.'

JAN DAWSON

B.F.I. Award, 1971

The British Film Institute Award for 1971 (the Sutherland trophy) has been made to Robert Bresson for his film *Quatre Nuits d'un Réveur*, shown at the NFT during last year's London Festival. On the face of it a conservative choice perhaps (there were certainly more immediately innovative if less ultimately distinguished films among the contenders for the 1971 Award), but one that was made partly in recognition of Bresson's work as a whole. If *Quatre Nuits* is undeniably a slighter work than *Mouchette* or *Au Hasard, Balthazar*, it is no less unmistakably the unique creation of this supremely original artist of the cinema. 'The language of images is still so unknown, so new, so difficult to practise,' Bresson said in an interview in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*; which is a characteristically self-effacing remark from a director whose superlative achievement in the cinema has been his understanding of the essence of that language.

Introducing the interview with Bresson, Carlos Clarens predicted a less than favourable future for *Quatre Nuits*, and so it has turned out. The film is evidently not a commercial success in France, and in this country is still without a distributor. One can only hope that

someone will see the light and give it a commercial run. Bresson, meanwhile, is still trying to set up his new production.

Maybe ORTF, which has produced a number of feature films recently, will give Bresson the support he needs. If Bresson were Italian, the odds are he'd already have been signed up by RAI, the state television network, which has already backed films by Olmi (*The Scavengers*), Fellini (*Clowns*), Bertolucci (*Spider's Strategy*) and Rossellini (*Socrates*) and is now also setting up features with Latin American directors like Glauber Rocha and Fernando Solanas. Since 1968, RAI has moved into feature film production in a big way, and now in fact ranks as Italy's leading producer. With the main B.F.I. award goes a special mention to RAI for its enterprise in this field. A tribute to RAI's film programme was mounted at the National Film Theatre last April; and its scope—eleven films from nine directors—gave some idea of the potential.

'Images'



The cross-fertilisation process (television backing features, directors working for television) has clearly been fruitful, and Bertolucci was not the first director to recognise the opportunity for experiment ('Television is the only place where it is possible to go ahead with research in form'). Other countries might do well to look at the RAI idea and its practical working. Not least the British television companies, at a time when not a few talented directors can't get work in films. After all, several of them are already working for television... making commercials.

Hungarian Sindbad

Any general impression formed by Western audiences about Eastern European films could be affected by a new Hungarian work called *Sindbad*. It is the first feature of a comparatively new director, Zoltán Huszárik, who made his name in 1966 with a 20-minute short called *Elegy*, in which he used colour and music to achieve highly original effects of poetic violence.

When Huszárik started to film the interconnected short stories of an esoteric turn of the century writer, Gyula Krúdy, literary mandarins were sceptical. Many wondered whether he would be discouraged on political (or in his case, apolitical) grounds; but by now a thaw had set in, rehabilitating the Hungarian cultural heritage even where it was middle-class in style and spirit. The veneration accorded literary classics may in fact have helped to get Huszárik's script approved, so that for once a serious Hungarian film has neither an overt social message nor an implicit reappraisal of history.

The greatest surprise, however, is *Sindbad's* overwhelming popular

success. Hungarian films are seldom appreciated in their own country. Apart from light comedies, the exceptions are films which depend on a clear story-line and virtuoso acting: in other words, in which theatrical values are still recognisable. But *Sindbad* has not even a story-line. It begins with the protagonist's body being jolted across the countryside at daybreak on a cart; it proceeds by cuts and dissolves to a series of love scenes, each with a different woman, remembered, imagined or projected by Sindbad.

Huszárik is a painter and designer as well as a film-maker. His chief assistant on the script, János Tóth, is better known as a cameraman (of Károly Makk's *Love*, for instance). Sándor Sára, much praised for his inventive compositions both as a cameraman and a director (*Twelfth Night*, *The Upthrown Stone*), handled the shooting. The result of so many trained eyes is the film's almost overpowering visual beauty, and the soundtrack, with its liberal use of Mozart, heightens the aesthetic pleasure.

This Sindbad is not a sailor: he is a poet or artist whose work is his life. His travels are imaginary, like Donne's, and again like Donne, there is wit as well as sensuality in the promptings of such a daring imagination:

Only let mee love none, no,
but the sport;
From country grasse,
to comfitures of Court,
Or cities quelque choses,
let report
My minde transport.

It is all a long way from Jancsó-land. Sindbad's cities are the small baroque towns of the hill country, his grass grows between the rusting iron lacework and moss-laden crosses of old churchyards. But this lyrical pastel-coloured romanticism is for the eye only. The dialogues, and even more the

monologues, are redolent of irony. When Sindbad loves, he lies, and his laments mock himself. The sensuousness of the camera, as it beautifies food, landscapes and objects as well as women, might otherwise become cloying, and the nostalgic could slide into the sentimental. Yet it never does: instead, Huszár recreates the metaphysical conceit on film.

MARI KUTTNA

You Be Helen Hayes...

'Say, kid, how'd you like to be in pictures?' Does anyone pick up anyone, even in Hollywood, with a corny line like that any more? Doubtful, to say the least. But in the expanding tourist industry which the Hollywood studios hope these days will help swell their diminishing returns (if no one will buy the product any more, at least they can visit the factory), the urge to be up there with the stars still obviously counts for a lot. Hence, no doubt, the latest addition to Universal's sub-Disneyland studio tour, the big daddy of them all, in that it has been going since 1965. After a morning's stately progress round the monuments—from the *Phantom of the Opera* set left over from Lon Chaney to the *Psycho* house, by way of Carol Channing's house in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, a cottage once shot at by Tom Mix, and an automated flood together with crashing tree-trunk which can be lifted back into place for the next batch of suckers by a light prod from one dainty finger—there is lunch and then the *pièce de résistance*.

Reverently the group of tourists is led to an actual set from an actual movie—the interior of the air liner at the end of *Airport*. Visitors are distributed about the seats within according to the pattern of the film's closing sequences, and are then handed out lines to say—you be Helen Hayes and I'll be... To give it all an extra spice of life, Dean Martin is there, not quite in person, but specially videotaped, to make his speech about not panicking just because there happens to be a mad bomber

shut in the lavatory. The selected line-readers respond on cue, and then wait a moment or two to see—themselves, in movies at last, or at least a near videotaped equivalent. For their performances have been simultaneously taped, in exactly the same set-ups as those used in the original movie, and so now they can see exactly how they would look co-starring with Dean Martin in a tense moment from one of the top moneymakers in the whole history of movies (*Variety* dixit). See, easy as falling off an automated plastic log.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Scripts Unlimited

Script Development Limited, the new company recently set up by Dimitri de Grunwald and Peter Hall, sounds like a good idea. It's described as 'a radical alternative to the present chaotic system.' If the actual proposals sound a bit more modest than that, at least they are rationally directed towards tackling some of the maladies of film production at a realistic point, with no specious suggestions of instant cure-all.

At present, as Peter Hall points out, the industry is putting only some one per cent of its resources into developing the raw material, the actual movie scripts. Financiers are sold ideas or rough drafts or treatments; money is then wasted, and projects collapse, in getting a script up to the starting line. Script Development, which is described as 'not a producing company, but a developing and setting up company,' aims partly to reduce the margin of error. 'The purpose is to develop the ideas for scripts of its members (with particular emphasis on original subjects) and to bring those scripts to a point where they are fully realised screenplays.' After that, the company will 'prepare a package of screenplay/director/cast/budget, and will then, with its collective strength, take on the backers and distributors to set up the film.'

Peter Hall doesn't jib at the suggestion that this sounds rather like an agency deal, with writers

and directors doing their own packaging. He points out that in the present situation, the projects likeliest to get off the ground are presold best-sellers, TV series spin-offs (an endless future of *On the Buses*), and properties which happen to catch the attention of box-office stars. Script Development hopes to redress the balance somewhat in favour of screen originals, and to attract or attract back writers disillusioned with the whole time-wasting, shilly-shallying business of actually getting their work on to the screen.

Robert Bolt, a founder member of the company who has just directed his own first feature, *Lamb*, says in a heartfelt way that, 'The energy used in setting up a production is likely to leave a director exhausted when he actually gets to making the film.' Other founder members are directors Anthony Harvey and Christopher Miles and writer John Hopkins. Hall and de Grunwald, the joint managing directors, hope eventually to attract a maximum of twenty to their stable. They also hope that some directors may be encouraged to take more of a hand in writing, and some writers to follow Bolt's lead in directing their own scripts.

In the company's first year, everyone will be giving his services free. After that, the operating costs will be met by a levy (amount as yet unspecified, and presumably variable) on each film made by the company's members. 'Profits will be ploughed back, so that work by members, after the first year, can be paid for.'

Peter Hall stresses that this isn't as altruistic as it might sound. The idea is not to stimulate experiment but to produce saleable, developed projects. Script Development's progress is likely to depend on what scripts its members actually come up with; and on the strength of its collective line-up. Mr. de Grunwald, for one, is optimistic: 'We believe that talent doesn't need money as much as money needs talent.'

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Characteristically, he saw the achievement of documentary today in terms of 'what it has done and is doing in the less privileged countries.' He cited the example of India, where 450 million people out of a total population of 550 million are outside the range of the so called mass media, accessible only by word of mouth. 'There is a whole world for the documentary film to take over,' he said. 'The big time is word of mouth, to get into the word of mouth business... You're in with all the teachers then... And of course if the teaching force begins to arm itself with the serious use of film as a power of expression for democratic purposes, then you've got yourself a very, very big development indeed, which makes all our developments of the Thirties in England look like two cents. Oh, I think there are far bigger things happening than anything we dreamt of.'



John Grierson with Sydney Newman

He objected to my question about his own greatest achievement: 'I don't think in those terms at all.' But he added, 'As a politician, I think the best operation, the neatest operation I've ever been associated with, was the founding of the National Film Board of Canada... I had the great advantage of having the sympathy and support of the Prime Minister there, but it was in every way a well done thing. It was very difficult because it meant liquidating many vested interests, and it meant a good deal of cruelty in the liquidation of vested interests, so don't think it was an innocent affair. But as a piece of public service, rather progressive, creative public service so far as the use of the film in the public interest is concerned, that was a very tidy job.'

In fact, Grierson was always most creative not as a film-maker himself (his one screen credit as director is for *Drifters*), but as a politician with the practical ability to open up new worlds for more than film-makers, and as a teacher whose firm inspiration showed people new possibilities within themselves. Forty years on, all the original members of his documentary movement are still linked together in their loyalty towards him—a revealing tribute to what he stood for.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

Barbra Streisand in Peter Bogdanovich's *'What's Up, Doc?'*



the CITIZEN KANE book

Bernard Herrmann and Orson Welles



George Coulouris and Bernard Herrmann
with Ted Gilling



George Coulouris (left) in 'Citizen Kane'

George Coulouris, one of the original Mercury Players, was assigned in *Citizen Kane* the role of Walter Parks Thatcher, Kane's guardian. Bernard Herrmann composed the film's music score—his first film assignment. Each separately examined *The Citizen Kane Book** prior to its British publication and national press reviews.

Italicised quotations are taken from Pauline Kael's introductory essay 'Raising Kane', which accompanies the first publication of the shooting script by Herman J. Mankiewicz and Orson Welles and the cutting continuity of the completed film. The shooting script is interspersed with eighty-one frame enlargements from the film.

HERRMANN: If anyone who hadn't seen *Citizen Kane* judged the picture by the quality of the frame enlargements in this book, I doubt if he would want to see it. They're very poor for a book which costs six pounds. I've seen better reproductions in small paperbacks like *Focus on Citizen Kane*. I'd have preferred a book of clear stills with a running commentary of the picture accompanying the script.

COULOURIS: I resent Pauline Kael's attempt to explain the film so largely in terms of Herman Mankiewicz's past work. If you look at Mankiewicz's credits at the back of the book, it's hard to connect any of the stuff he wrote with *Citizen Kane*. Most of it is superficial, shallow entertainment. The whole style of her essay is superficial. She tries to say that Orson copied this and that and that some of the film was connected with a previous assignment of Gregg Toland. That doesn't interest me in the least. The only thing that matters in the end is the quality of the finished picture.

Young interviewers . . . don't bother to check the statements of their subjects . . . and thus leave the impression that the self-aggrandising stories they record are history . . . If one trusts what appears in print, Welles not only wrote Kane but just about everything half-way good in any picture he ever acted in. (page 47)

HERRMANN: There seem to be two schools of film criticism. One wants to prove that directors like Welles and Hitchcock did everything and no one else got a look in. The other wants to prove that certain directors never did what they got credit for. Orson is evidently one of the latter in Miss Kael's view.

Those who admire Citizen Kane, which is constructed to present different perspectives of a man's life, seem naïvely willing to accept Welles' view of its making, namely that it is his sole creation. (page 48)

[The secretary of Herman Mankiewicz] says that Welles didn't write (or dictate) one line of the shooting script of Citizen Kane. (page 38)

HERRMANN: I've only worked with Orson once since *Kane* and that was on *The Magnificent Ambersons*. I've seen him only occasionally over the years, so I could hardly be considered sycophantic, or part of a Welles coterie. But I was associated with him, as Bernstein says, 'before the beginning . . .' and to try to take away the achievement of a remarkable artist at that period is terrible. He *did* give Herman Mankiewicz credit from the word go. This is an attempt to say just the opposite.

**The Citizen Kane Book*. Secker and Warburg, £6.00.

COULOURIS: Supposing that you isolate the script. Whether Mankiewicz did it or not, it was still superior to 99 per cent of the material being shot in Hollywood at that time. I've always wanted to be in pictures that had guts and meaning. Actors want this sort of material because there's nothing that makes them look better. But the whole power of the film is visual; it's not dialogue. The first thing I learned in switching from the stage to films is that lines become subordinate. There's nothing worse than the endless dialogue you hear in those early talkies with Ruth Chatterton doing Frederick Lonsdale plays. So apart from the fact that Welles' direction was vital, the script has marvellous material and should be properly credited.

HERRMANN: Film being a mosaic art, that doesn't alter the fact that it's still Welles' film. Mr. Mankiewicz has not been in oblivion. The screenplay credit says 'By Herman Mankiewicz and Orson Welles'. That's what we should accept and be content to live with. His name has been on the credits for everyone to see from the beginning. I have the music credit for *Kane*, Welles didn't write it, but that's not the point. It's part of the picture. The newsreel in *Kane* was cut and scored by the newsreel department at RKO at Orson's request. He said they had their own crazy way of cutting and they were the only people to do it.



Kane among newspapers

What Miss Kael doesn't understand is that the film in the end has nothing to do with the damn screenplay really. It's the springboard. Nobody goes to look at *Kane* just for the story. It's how it's done. Audiences are like children; they don't mind hearing the same story over and over again. It's how you tell it. It depends on so many factors. Lighting, camerawork, set design, performances—anything could have upset the equilibrium and sabotaged the picture. Whoever wrote the script, it wouldn't have been *Citizen Kane* with anyone but Welles directing it.

Part of the real fascination of *Kane* for me is that it's one of the few pictures ever made which constructs the portrait of a character. I've always thought that Orson was influenced by a popular novel of the time called *I Am Jonathan Scrivener*. All its characters talk about a man they know. In the last sentence, the doorbell rings and the butler announces Mr. Jonathan Scrivener. You never see him. It's famous and Orson was very fond of it. But there are always various influences when a work of art is developing.

Mankiewicz was trying to give a comprehensive view of the contradictions that emerge

when an idealist attempts to succeed in business and politics. Fragments of this are left, but their meaning is no longer clear. (page 60)

[Mankiewicz] couldn't write the character as a tragic fallen hero because he couldn't resist making him funny. Mankiewicz had been hacking out popular comedies and melodramas far too long to write drama; one does not dictate tragedy to a stenotypist. (page 73)

COULOURIS: I don't think Pauline Kael succeeds in building up Mankiewicz at Welles' expense because it's not consistent. Half the time, she's trying to prove that the movie is a shallow masterpiece—kitsch which Mankiewicz was suitable to do as a wisecracking, shallow person. The other half, she's saying the picture is marvellous. HERRMANN: It's part of the whole current critical scene to belittle most of this century's achievements. Richard Strauss is kitsch and a second-rater like Mahler is suddenly a master. The trouble with this book is a confrontation between amateurs and professionals. These people who write books about *Kane* are amateurs. Why doesn't a first class director or cameraman write about it or get Mr. Welles to talk, as Peter Bogdanovich is doing?

Welles had a vitalising, spellbinding talent: he was the man who brought out the best in others and knew how to use it. What keeps Citizen Kane alive is that Welles wasn't prevented from trying things out . . . Kane is not a great work that suddenly burst out of a young prodigy's head . . . It is a superb example of collaboration. (pages 74-75)

COULOURIS: What you have to ask is what the result might have been with any other director. I think she hasn't completely understood the movie atmosphere at that time. She is right that there was an immense feeling of frustration in everybody; they all enjoyed making a lot of money and all yearned to do something marvellous. But the point is that Welles struck it lucky in another medium, got *carte blanche* in Hollywood and refused to throw away a magnificent tactical position. I think that movies are particularly attuned to gigantic themes and Orson developed one in his first film. Whether you credit Toland or Mankiewicz for their contributions or not, Orson is still the focal point because of his breakthrough. He attracted talented people to himself and achieved, with their help, something special.

For the people who did much of the work on Welles' projects, the temptation must have been strong to expose what they considered this saviour's feet of clay. (page 38)

HERRMANN: I've done over forty films since *Citizen Kane* and none of them was in the same league. That doesn't make it the end-all masterpiece, but if I'd had the luck to end my career working with Orson instead of starting with him, I'd still say that he was by far the most exciting person to make a film with because of his sheer creativeness. I've worked with other distinguished directors, but they're very secretive about their vision. With Welles, you always knew what he was looking for. He was precocious, with a great streak of originality. He has no intellectual backbone as an artist; he's a great improviser in the sense that Beecham was a great improvisational conductor. The Mercury Players were a superb orchestra. When Orson had his own people around

him, things happened. I'm not saying that Mankiewicz didn't make a contribution. I daresay he did. Everybody did, including most of Orson's drinking partners like Preston Sturges and John Barrymore. Orson has never said it was his sole creation. Everybody made his own contribution and that's film-making. It's not a mystique.

What I . . . now found almost mysteriously beautiful was Orson Welles' performance . . . Welles is one of the most self-conscious of actors, and this is what is so nakedly revealed when he's playing a young man of his own age and he's insecure about what's coming through . . . I think there's no doubt that he's more sure of himself when he's playing this somewhat older Kane . . . (page 55)

COULOURIS: Welles was rarely satisfied with his own acting. He felt nervous and uncomfortable and often took it out on somebody else. We had a peculiar relationship in which we made fun of each other. But I made many films after *Kane* and one thing I've noticed is its intensity and power—more than would be tolerable in many films. The scene in which we argue back and forth in the newspaper office is not conventional movie acting. With other actors or another director, it would have been 'brought down' a lot and lost a good deal. There were no great portentous conferences. It was pragmatic trial and error.

'Foible' is the word that Welles' former associates tend to apply to his assertions of authorship. (page 40)

HERRMANN: Both of us have criticisms of Welles; we haven't even gone into his pros and cons, but it would be very difficult to sit by and see this kind of injustice done to him. Neither this nor Charles Higham's book on Orson has his participation. I'm sure he's having a giant, Falstaffian laugh at them because all these books and essays are like *Kane* itself. Everybody's trying to find out what Rosebud is . . . But Orson is quite right. Why should he waste his time with these so-called intellectuals saying that he had a formula for something or that someone else did part of the work? I admire him for that. *Kane* was arrived at through an inner compulsion on the part of Orson Welles. Having known him as I did, I would say that it was part of the fibre of the man.

[Pauline Kael's essay refers to Ferdinand Lundberg's 1947 lawsuit against Welles, Mankiewicz and RKO for copyright infringement of the book 'Imperial Hearst'. Having examined Welles' testimony given in 1950, she concludes]. He seemed more concerned with continuing the old pretence that the movie was not about Hearst than with refuting Lundberg's charge of plagiarism. (page 81)

HERRMANN: Whatever inspires an artist is his own affair, whether it's William Randolph Hearst, Harold McCormick or Joe Doakes. There was a tradition in America, particularly in the Middle West, where Orson was born, of this type of millionaire. Orson heard all the legends, particularly about McCormick, when he was a boy. Dr. Bernstein told me that the picture was not specifically about Hearst. If old man Hearst hated Welles so much, why did he employ Welles' former guardian as one of his physicians? Bernstein said that

Hearst had *Kane* run for him toward the end of his life and asked 'What's all the fuss about?' I think it's a bit of everybody of that period, about a man who has Aladdin's lamp and can do anything he likes. In a way, it's a dreamlike autobiography of Welles.

When [Welles] was read a long list of events in the film that parallel Hearst's life . . . he came up with the surprising information that the film dealt 'quite as fully with the world of grand opera as with the world of newspaper publishing'. (pages 81-82)

HERRMANN: When we were kids, there used to be a 'tune detector' called Sigmund Spaeth. He used to be able to prove that no matter what the orchestra was playing, it was from something else. Miss Kael is trying to be a script detector. There are rumours about the identity of the girl on whom Schlesinger based *Darling*. But who cares? What counts is that it is a wonderful film. It reminds me of when Brahms wrote his great First Symphony, many super-sensitive people pointed out to him that the melody of the last movement was the same as the Beethoven Ninth Symphony. He said, 'Any jackass would notice that.'

COULOURIS: It's all academic, isn't it? How many angels could dance on the head of a pin or what would the 'Eroica' have been if Napoleon hadn't become Emperor? While the researchers try to discover Napoleon's effect on Beethoven, who is assessing the symphony?

Mankiewicz had been taken off Night at the Opera but what he and Welles—with the assistance of Bernard Herrmann—did to the opera in Citizen Kane was in almost exactly the same style, and as funny . . . As Mankiewicz planned it, Susan was to make her debut in Massenet's Thaïs . . . but to use Thaïs would have cost a fee, so Bernard Herrmann wrote choice excerpts of a fake French-Oriental opera—Salammbô (pages 66, 67)

HERRMANN: Pauline Kael was never in touch with me while the book was being written. The musical information is rubbish. If the rest of her opinions are as accurate as her statements about the music, none of it is to be taken very seriously. She's trying to say that after bringing a group of people to Hollywood and paying them salaries for months, they couldn't have paid a modest fee for *Thaïs*. The truth is that no music in *Thaïs* or any other opera would create the impact of the scene—a terrified girl lost in the quicksand of a powerful orchestra. The orchestra plays for forty seconds to develop a tremendous tension before she sings. It had nothing to do with the Brothers Marx.

Mankiewicz, catering to the public, gave it the empty, stupid, no-talent blonde it wanted . . . Movie audiences assumed that Marion Davies was a pathetic whiner like Susan Alexander . . . (page 70)

HERRMANN: Miss Kael is so wrong when she pokes fun at Susan. The girl arouses Kane's protective instincts. He wouldn't have been attracted by a glamorous beauty. He saw them all day long. Orson is the greatest Romantic director the films have ever had, and next in line is Hitchcock.

Mankiewicz and Welles] were big eaters, big talkers, big spenders, big talents; they

were not men of what is ordinarily called 'good character'. They were out to get not only Hearst but each other. (page 33)

COULOURIS: Imaginary twaddle.

HERRMANN: I found that in my professional dealings with Orson, he was always a pro. What he did the rest of the time is his personal life and nothing to do with our work. It's of no interest to me whatever.

There are monsters and there are also sacred monsters. Both Welles and Mankiewicz deserve places in the sacred monster category . . . [They] wanted to do something that would cap the invasion of the Martians . . . (page 32)

HERRMANN: Rubbish.

COULOURIS: Quite legitimate, I should think. Why the hell not? Showmanship is part of movies. Why not a subject which would electrify and startle people? I waited ten months to do the picture while they prepared it. Orson called me to his house one evening. It was on a mountain top outside Los Angeles. We went out on to the terrace and saw the whole city lit up. The war was on. 'Look,' he said, 'one of the few cities left in the world with the lights on.' Then he described *Citizen Kane* to me, outlining the whole story, standing there with the stars above and the lights of Los Angeles below. They were working on the script then.

HERRMANN: I think that part of the resentment Miss Kael shows toward *Kane* stems from the fact that it's not from a play or book, but from an original screenplay. It's always written that Hitchcock, for example, created *Psycho* or *Vertigo*. They were written from Robert Bloch by Joseph Stefano, and by Alec Coppel and Sam Taylor from Boileau and Narcejac. Hitchcock didn't have the idea of *Psycho*, but Orson had the idea of *Kane*.

The scope of Welles' reputation seems to have infuriated Hollywood; it was a cultural reproach from the East. (page 40)

HERRMANN: That is true. All of us were resented for coming to Hollywood. In my own case, I was told by the heads of many

music departments that there was no room for people like me there. They had a tight little corporation going.

COULOURIS: There was no resentment of the actors. I had to take a job with Warner Brothers in *All This and Heaven Too* because I was off the payroll while they were preparing *Kane*. I didn't find any resentment at the studios, but it was different for Benny because he's a very good musician and he would be taking a whole department away from somebody and they are all scared of that. But they're not scared of an actor in the same way. I thought it was a wonderful idea for Orson to use radio actors whose faces weren't known, to make a fresh impact.

American writers . . . went to Hollywood and . . . experienced it as a prostitution of their talents . . . Though more than one fell in love with movies and thus suffered not only from personal frustration but from the corruption of the great, still new art . . . (page 10)

HERRMANN: I think the greatest thing that ever happened to Herman Mankiewicz, whatever his contribution, was that he met Welles, not the other way round. If Welles hadn't created *Kane*, he would have made some other equally remarkable picture. Mankiewicz's credits don't show any other remarkable scripts. His only moment in the sun was when he came across Orson Welles. And none of us on the film, including Mr. Mankiewicz, ever thought that this was anything anybody was going to worry about. It's a job of work one did, a part of one's professional life.

You know, most screenwriters of the period were 'the Great American Novelist' being whores and hoping for better things. They were always about to write a great novel or great play while demeaning themselves with movie writing. I was at a party at William Dieterle's house which Thomas Mann attended. One of these writers, quite drunk, came up to him and said something like 'How could a wonderful writer like you even talk to miserable whores like us?' Mann looked at him and said, 'My dear sir, you are not big enough to make yourself so small.'

The beginning and the end of Citizen Kane





COUNTRIES OF THE MIND

Tom Milne



Watching a Delvaux film is rather like taking a stroll through a stately mansion. Graceful and leisurely, long corridors unfold, bringing with them a sense of indefinable mystery; and then suddenly, just around the corner in its appointed place on the wall, a familiar face, a landscape, a style one knows and recognises. I am thinking particularly of the train sequence in *Un Soir . . . un Train*, with its silent, wintry landscapes by courtesy of Brueghel, or of the old Dutch masters who painted the still-lives for food and furniture, not to mention Anna Karina at the window with her mixing-bowl, in *Rendez-vous à Bray*.

The echoes here are specific, but throughout his work one is never allowed to forget that Delvaux's vision stems from the land of the great Flemish painters. His first feature, *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*, with its extraordinary sense of beauty and horror inextricably intertwined, of a man's mind cracking open to reveal the terror festering within it, might have been imagined by Hieronymus Bosch. But as Richard Roud has observed, its style, poised less precariously on the brink of madness, lies closer to contemporary Flemish artists like Magritte and Paul Delvaux who 'use an almost academic technique of painting in order to represent the fantastic, the unbelievable, the impossible.'

Delvaux's world, then, is one of calm bourgeois interiors carved out of the surrounding darkness, of utter normality which suddenly finds itself struggling to keep safely within its circle of light. Mealtimes are moments of crucial importance to Delvaux, perhaps because something so essentially a private, animal activity as eating has been turned by convention into one of the great social occasions. At any rate, one remembers Govert Miereveld at the beginning of *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*, alone with his obsessive vision of beauty, blotting out the familiar little sounds of domestic activity as he lingers dreamily over his breakfast. Then his little daughter enters to dip her sugar in his coffee, and from that moment, as though future trespassers were to be forbidden access to his inner world, he wipes his family from his mind in order to devote himself exclusively to his phantom. And in *Un Soir . . . un Train*, it is over a romantically candle-lit meal, designed by Mathias (Yves Montand) as a tribute to their love, that Anne (Anouk Aimée) makes her first tangible movement of withdrawal from him, leading them into the voyage of discovery which shows them that what they took to be a deep, abiding love is in fact a yawning abyss of emptiness.

Journeys, too, are a central motif: timid sorties from the ring of security which leave the traveller defenceless, lost in a strange land and shattered by his discovery that 'beauty is a window open on a wound'. This phrase (or more correctly, its reverse: 'A wound is a window open on beauty, on a marvellous world called flesh') comes from *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*, where it is put into Govert's mind by the pathologist whose autopsy on a drowned man sends him spiralling into madness by its revelation of the corruption of beauty; but it might equally well apply to Mathias in *Un Soir . . . un Train*. Throughout this film Anne is a mysterious, melting, loving presence for Mathias, conjured from the past as well as existing in the present. Their love seems perfect until she, still tender, still desiring and desirable, withdraws because she insists that there is something lacking between them. Then comes the journey in which she, after angrily walking away in the street because he (for reasons of political circumspection) does not want

her to accompany him, turns up on the train after all. With an unspoken reconciliation seemingly resting between them, the train halts in the middle of nowhere, Anne vanishes, and Mathias, after a nightmarish flight through desolate, wintry fields to a ghost town where the inhabitants engage him in a weird *danse macabre*, wakes to find that the train has crashed and that Anne has been killed.

To read this sequence as an allegory of the supernatural, a flight of pseudo-philosophy about life and death along the lines of *Outward Bound*, is surely to miss the entire point of the film, which is, as in *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*, to trace the process whereby a man's mind may be freed from chimera. The theme, implied throughout, is underlined by the production of *Everyman* on which Anne is working as costume designer and from which she culls her belief that 'Conscience and lucidity may conquer Death'. In trying to provoke Mathias into a closer exploration of the relationship between them which he takes for granted, Anne is not trying to fend off death itself, of course, but *la petite mort*, the slow erosion which uses indifference, habit and lack of understanding as its weapons.

Mathias is too content, too secure in his belief in the endurance of their love, to wish or need to explore. Throughout the film, however, tiny rifts occur in his peace of mind, connecting to illuminate for him Anne's increasing sense of isolation, her desire to reject her hard-won independence as a career woman, to marry, to be secure, to have a child before it is too late. Crucially, for instance, there is Anne's fear, as a Frenchwoman in Belgium, a land torn by ferocious linguistic riots, when the tram on which they are travelling seems threatened by Flemish militants. More subtly, a visit to Mathias' mother in an old people's home brings intimations of mortality as her gnarled hand presses an apple on him and she asks whether he has a son yet; an intimation cruelly extended when he later recalls, in flashback, how Anne once gave, casually it seemed then, an apple to a stray child; and yet again when he goes to the cemetery with a bunch of flowers but cannot find his father's grave.

All these elements are brought together in the nightmare sequence, which is constructed out of a dreamlike rearrangement of his memories and anxieties, to illuminate

the flash of conscience and lucidity in which Mathias at last sees that, like Anne, he is a stranger in a strange land. The barren, desolate landscape is the reality of his relationship with Anne; the tawdry little palace of entertainment is studded with coloured lights which cheapen the delicate enchantment of the Christmas decorations that hovered over his memory of his first meeting with Anne; the elderly professor and the student who accompany him on his odyssey from the train suggest the father he has lost and the son he has never had; the hostile townsfolk, babbling strange tongues and silently gobbling gourmet dinners, cruelly parody the romantic agony of his last meal with Anne. Above all, with beauty again becoming a window opening on a wound, his new lucidity reveals that his last image of Anne in the corridor of the train, serene and exquisite and forgiving, was as deceptive as the rest. Nothing has changed in the dying landscape of their love except that, now that he knows, it is too late.

If Delvaux has a skeleton key to the inner life of his films, it is surely this image of ideal, impossible beauty—Beata Tyszkiewicz in the dazzlingly luminous shot which hovers over the beginning of *The Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*; Anouk Aimée in the corridor of the train, or making her mute appeal from the flashback to a wintry forest in *Un Soir . . . un Train*; Anna Karina, mysteriously distorted by candlelight, but finally revealed as a tranquil, reassuring silhouette as she stands in the window in *Rendez-vous à Bray*—a distant yet elusively beckoning beauty, which sings the siren song of Baudelaire's *L'Invitation au Voyage*:

Mon enfant, ma soeur,
Songe à la douceur
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble!
Aimer à loisir
Aimer et mourir
Au pays qui te ressemble!
Les soleils mouillés
De ces ciels brouillés
Pour mon esprit ont les charmes
Si mystérieux
De tes traîtres yeux,
Brûlant à travers leurs larmes.

This *pays qui te ressemble*, with its alluring sun mysteriously veiled behind a blurred and misting sky, could hardly be bettered as a description of the strange countries of the mind traversed by both Govert and Mathias in their pursuit of a chimera.

Rather surprisingly, since both these hermetic and secretive films are based on novels by the Flemish writer Johan Daisne, whereas *Rendez-vous à Bray* is adapted from a much more open-ended short story (*Le Roi Cophetua*) by the French novelist Julien Gracq, Delvaux's third film is moulded from precisely the same mental crucible. Indeed, in both plot and atmosphere, *Rendez-vous à Bray* might almost be considered as the third panel of a triptych illustrating a progress akin to Dante's Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso.

Without changing a word of Gracq's story, Delvaux has his hero, Julien Eschenbach (Mathieu Carrière), retrace the steps of Govert and Mathias when he is lured on a journey into the unknown by a mysterious telegram from an old friend, Jacques Neuil, asking Julien to meet him at La Fougeraie, his country house near Bray-la-Forêt. The



'Un Soir . . . un Train'. Above: Hector Camerlynck and Yves Montand at dinner at the phantom inn. Below: Mathias' last image of Anne (Anouk Aimée) in the train corridor.



year is 1917, and as he leaves Paris by train, Julien finds himself in an alien world of soldiers on leave or returning to the front, of silence and hostile stares as strangers eye his civilian clothes. The train, travelling towards the front and away from the warmth and reassuring normality of Paris, seems to penetrate into a world of silence which becomes a reality as he reaches Bray, a ghostly, windswept village of deserted streets and autumnal trees, and where the only signs of life, until he reaches the forlornly overgrown gateway of La Fougeraie and pulls the bell, are two children who shy away at his approach.

The housekeeper, monosyllabic and reserved, shows him into a cheerful, comfortably appointed study where he begins his long, solitary vigil which ends, not with the arrival of Jacques Nueil, but with his apotheosis in the arms of the enigmatic housekeeper (who may be no housekeeper at all, perhaps Jacques' wife or mistress). All this follows, almost image by image, the meticulous descriptions in Gracq's story, not only in detail but in elusive implication. While waiting for the arrival of his host, for instance, Julien makes a tour of the study reminiscent of Garbo's farewell to her room in *Queen Christina*, running his fingers over the piano, leafing through the music, trying the chairs, touching and savouring this room he has never seen before. It is almost an evocation of Jacques, and one knows that he will never arrive to keep his rendezvous in this room. For, in Gracq's words, it is one of those 'demeures-musées où, dans l'angle d'une des pièces que le visiteur traverse, une chaîne tendue et un écriteau isolent la table, la chaise, l'encrier, les plumes encore taillées qu'a consacrées autrefois une main illustre, et où non le tremblement de la vie, mais plutôt une rigidité mortuaire saisit ce désordre épousseté.'

Jacques may or may not be dead (since he is an aviator on active service, it is very much on the cards), but the room is in any case a memorial to something else: to the death of his friendship with Julien, a friendship which Julien still treasures fondly in his memory, but which is long dead and gone. The first flashback (on the train taking him to La Fougeraie) is a joyous one of himself with Jacques and their friend Odile making a *Jules and Jim* trio in an open sports car. But as he waits in the study at La Fougeraie, his memories become gradually muted by recollection of Jacques' vociferous criticism of his refusal to compromise his art as a musician by playing at a society soirée, and his subsequent lapse into silent reproach, all the more bitter because it is unexplained.

It is hereabouts, killing two birds with one stone, that Delvaux makes his one major departure from Gracq's story, entirely changing its implication. In the original, Julien—or rather the unnamed narrator—has been invalided out of the army after being wounded in Flanders in the winter of 1914. Delvaux's Julien has remained a civilian: because he is a native of neutral Luxembourg, he explains, and his foreign accent would cause problems; but we are left in no doubt by his over-eagerness to explain and justify that he is anxious to save his skin. His cowardice brings a dividend to the extraordinary moment when the whole

house begins to tremble, chandeliers, decanters and tea-tray chattering anxiously as a distant bombardment starts up somewhere at the front. Gracq's narrator takes it in his stride, but Julien's nervous questions—'The front is twelve kilometres away,' the housekeeper reassures him composedly—pinpoint the gulf that has widened between the two friends. For, to put it much more crudely than the film ever does, Jacques is staking his life for an ideal, while Julien the idealist is simply letting things ride.

Once again, one might almost say, since Julien—unlike Govert, who set off in blind pursuit of an ideal, and unlike Mathias, who thought he had already found his—is revealed as someone who has always refused to commit himself. Cool, priggish and olympian, certain of his own superiority, he guards his purity by maintaining a regal detachment and by employing a delicate balance of values. He is willing to earn money by acting as accompanist to silent films in a cinema, for instance, but not to play after dinner for social snobs who might perhaps be able to give him a helping hand in fulfilling his ambition to become a concert pianist. And on a rather subtler level, elliptically suggested in the curious flashback scene at the inn, he is willing to share his friendship for Jacques with Odile, but reluctant even to consider, let alone to act upon, the hint that Odile may be in love with him. So, as the little girl playing hopscotch beneath his bedroom window just as he sets out for La Fougeraie forewarns him in her little rhyme set to a Brahms melody, 'Le Paradis n'est pas pour toi . . . Le Paradis est pour le Roi.'

Like the bird in the little girl's song which loses all its feathers, however, Julien is gradually stripped of his defences until, ensnared by the housekeeper's tantalisingly remote and tranquil beauty, he finally commits himself by sleeping with her. This is the moment, adumbrated in the little girl's song and by the painting that hangs on the wall of the room at La Fougeraie where the housekeeper patiently waits on Julien at dinner (a key scene again), when King Cophetua stoops to love the beggar-maid. But it is also something more. Apotheosis, I said earlier, but I am not quite sure how one should describe the sense of momentous decision, of transformation in Julien, as he takes the passive, yet somehow hieratic, housekeeper into his arms, and later stares at her wonderingly as she lies on the pillow beside him.

Was the whole affair planned by Jacques, with the connivance of the housekeeper, to effect this transformation in his friend? Neither Gracq nor Delvaux explains, though both leave the matter open to speculation. But where Gracq has his narrator (and the reader) tolerably convinced that Jacques has been killed—not only by his description of the room as a memorial museum and of his wait there as a vigil, but by his reading of a newspaper report of an aerial mission from Jacques' base which pointedly does not conclude with the ritual 'none of our aircraft is missing'—Delvaux withholds any tangible clues until the very end of the film. Then, as Julien steals away from the house to catch the first train back to Paris, he plants evidence to suggest exactly the opposite from Gracq. For Julien borrows a newspaper from a soldier on the platform which contains a report to the effect that all aircraft have been

grounded for three days because of bad weather. Hitherto determined to leave for Paris, Julien now hesitates, perhaps for the first time in his life, uncertain as to the motives of either Jacques or the housekeeper but certain that he must now be fully committed to them both. And as the camera irises down on his moment of hesitation outside the railway station, the little girl's voice reiterates, 'Le Paradis est pour le Roi.'

Rendez-vous à Bray, despite its basic simplicity, is not an easy film to unravel because one has to approach it as though one were deaf and dumb, trusting to one's sense of sight and touch because nuances are never put into words. After the bombardment in which the whole house gently trembles, for instance, suddenly all the lights go out, and there is a magnificent moment of release, and yet somehow almost of menace, when the housekeeper appears in the doorway to the study bearing a lighted candelabra. For Gracq, describing the sense of ambivalence in Delvaux's image is easy: 'Le geste du bras élevé resta suspendu, avec une nuance de complaisance songeuse, une seconde de plus qu'il n'eût fallu pour chercher la table—un peu comme on éclaire le visage d'un malade qui dort, un peu comme une ronde de nuit qui s'assure de la présence d'un prisonnier.'

Invalid and prisoner . . . Julien is both, incarcerated until he is cured of his malady in this mysterious mansion which might be, like the Beast's castle in *La Belle et la Bête*, under a magic spell awaiting release by love, or as Julien feels before he is caught in its calming web, one of those dark caverns in

which Fantômas lurks, waiting to lure his victims to destruction. For—and this is pure invention by Delvaux—the whole film is made under the sign of Feuillade. Not merely the quaint resuscitation of the use of the iris; not merely the extract from *Fantômas* which we watch at the cinema where Julien is employed as accompanist; but the fact that Julien, like the intrepid Fandor, is a journalist, and like him, is continually baffled in his pursuit of the diabolically cunning Fantômas (Jacques?) and in his entanglement with the latter's two enigmatic loves, dark Lady Beltham (the housekeeper?) and the pale Hélène (Odile?).

The whole film is therefore predicated on two conflicting impulses, magnificently realised in Ghislain Cloquet's superbly rich and delicate camerawork (if possible, even more beautiful than his work on *Un Soir . . . un Train*): the pure romantic urge towards the security of the castle and its mysterious princess, and the anguished shying away from the terrible traps which may lie waiting there. The two coalesce to provide *la sécurité qui coula de cette nuit* (Gracq). For next morning at dawn, although Julien is alone and hesitant, shorn of his purity in a no man's land between Paris and La Fougeraie, he has found a kind of security; perhaps because, as Delvaux commented in an interview, his purity before meant only that he meant nothing to anybody.

Like Govert and Mathias, Julien has discovered that beauty is a window open on a wound (maybe Jacques' wound, maybe the housekeeper's). Like them, he has achieved conscience and lucidity. Unlike them, he survives unscarred, perhaps to move on from this purgatory into paradise. ■

'Rendez-vous à Bray'. Dinner at La Fougeraie: Anna Karina and Mathieu Carrière





THE DIRECTOR AS SUPERSTAR

Joseph McBride

You'd think that an autobiographical film by the director of *8½* would attract considerable critical attention, but *Fellini: A Director's Notebook* has been almost completely ignored since it appeared in 1969. Evidently the reason for this is that it was made for American television (NBC) and, unlike Fellini's second television film, *The Clowns*, not shown in theatres. But with some of our most important directors turning to TV for backing these days (Renoir, Welles, Rossellini, Godard, *et al*), critics are going to have to lose some of their snobbishness about the medium.

The notebook has long been an accepted literary form, but Fellini's is the first of its kind in the commercial cinema, despite the recent proliferation of films about directors, including two about Fellini himself. It was made at the end of a very difficult period in his life, when he had given up a project which had occupied him for three years, *The Voyage of Mastorna*, had suffered a total physical collapse, and had just returned to work with a short exercise film, the *Never Bet the Devil Your Head* episode of the three-part Edgar Allan Poe film *Spirits of the Dead* (*Histoires Extraordinaires*), a feverish tale about a film star whose hallucinations on a trip to Cinecittà finally lead him to his death. It was not hard to draw a connection

between the character and Fellini himself. Andrew Sarris made a perceptive comment on what it revealed of Fellini's artistic dilemma: 'If Fellini can trot out the same old satirical routines at the drop of a hat or an option, what possible personal meaning could they ever have had? At what point, therefore, does a personal cinematic language become a tired cliché? . . . Fellini has spent a whole decade on this theme, and we are now moving into the Seventies. Perhaps his *Satyricon* will be a source of artistic renewal or, in some ultimate way, an occasion for artistic release of his more repetitious mannerisms'.

The Satyricon's theme was, in both its historical and personal senses, the clearing

away of dead conventions and obsessions in a new spirit of moral freedom. Its marvellous ending, with the young men climbing into the boat as the old men sit on shore eating the poet's corpse, made this surreally explicit. And I think the reason why *The Satyricon* was the kind of renewal Sarris hoped for, rather than just an occasion for the release of obsessions, was that Fellini was able to take stock of himself on film in *A Director's Notebook* before shooting it.

Although the film may seem at first glance to be a disconnected grab bag of gags, skits and memorabilia, it is actually a rigorous development of the theme of artistic stasis which Fellini pursued in *8½*. A development, not a regression: this is a film about how a man breaks loose from his artistic inhibitions and finds the moral strength to move forward and work again. Why did Fellini turn to documentary? Perhaps because he felt that he had gone so far into the fantasy mode that he became barren and stultified (*Giulietta of the Spirits* is a dead end in many ways) and needed to re-establish contact with the real world.

This has happened before in Fellini's career. He began, after all, as a script-writer in the neo-realist movement, and his first decade of directing was marked by a constant flux between theatrical fantasy and neo-realism, often within the same film. *La Dolce Vita* was a grand attempt to impose his fantasy life on to the reality of modern Rome (as his new film, *Roma*, evidently is), and from there Fellini veered completely into the interior world.

A Director's Notebook, admittedly, is fully accessible only to those familiar with Fellini's oeuvre; but this should not be an excuse for keeping it in obscurity. If I would not presume to put it in the first rank of Fellini's work (even though I enjoy it more than, say, *8½*, though less than *The Nights of Cabiria*), this is because the limitations of the notebook form are inherent in its virtues. There are parts of *A Director's Notebook* which are frankly awful, notably a scene of a bunch of whores and truck drivers cavorting in ancient Roman dress along the Appian Way which is about on the level of those Fellini pastiches that disfigure every student film festival. There are also parts of the film which rank with his best work; the long concluding sequence, a series of bizarre characters auditioning for roles in *The Satyricon*, moved me more than anything else he has done. But the special charm of *A Director's Notebook* comes from its inclusion of the bad along with the good, the silly with the sublime. If Fellini had exercised conventional artistic discretion and retained only the most 'presentable' sequences, we would have lost much of the insight into his personality; which, in the end, is what we hope to find in a notebook.

Fellini's preparations for filming his *Satyricon* form the running thread of the narrative. And since he is still in the free-associative stage of preparation (we don't see him actually shooting it until the very end, under the credits), the format is loose enough to let him go off on tangents only vaguely related to the central thread. The film divides into ten segments:

- (1) A visit to a group of hippies living in an abandoned set for *Mastorna*; a look at some of the props and set designs in a warehouse; and a brief glimpse of what the film would have been like.
- (2) A visit to the freaky night people who inhabit the Colosseum, as part of Fellini's attempt to seek parallels between modern and ancient Rome for *The Satyricon* (and for *Roma*?).
- (3) Fellini's wife Giulietta Masina introducing a sequence cut from *Nights of Cabiria* about a Santa Claus character known as 'the man with the sack' whom Fellini found in the Colosseum.
- (4) Fellini's reminiscence of his childhood moviegoing, including a parodistic recreation of a silent movie about ancient Rome.
- (5) Genius, the medium who appears in *Giulietta of the Spirits*, conducting a seance along the Appian Way in an attempt to communicate with the old Romans.
- (6) A tongue-in-cheek journey through the Roman subways, with a silly 'professor' who is dumbfounded when the subway suddenly turns into the catacombs.
- (7) A visit to Marcello Mastroianni, who

is too busy being lionised by journalists, fashion photographers, and a busload of matronly fans to talk with Fellini; a hectic screen test for *Mastorna*; and a brief discussion between director and actor about Fellini's inhibitions.

(8) A search for old Roman types in a slaughterhouse.

(9) The audition.

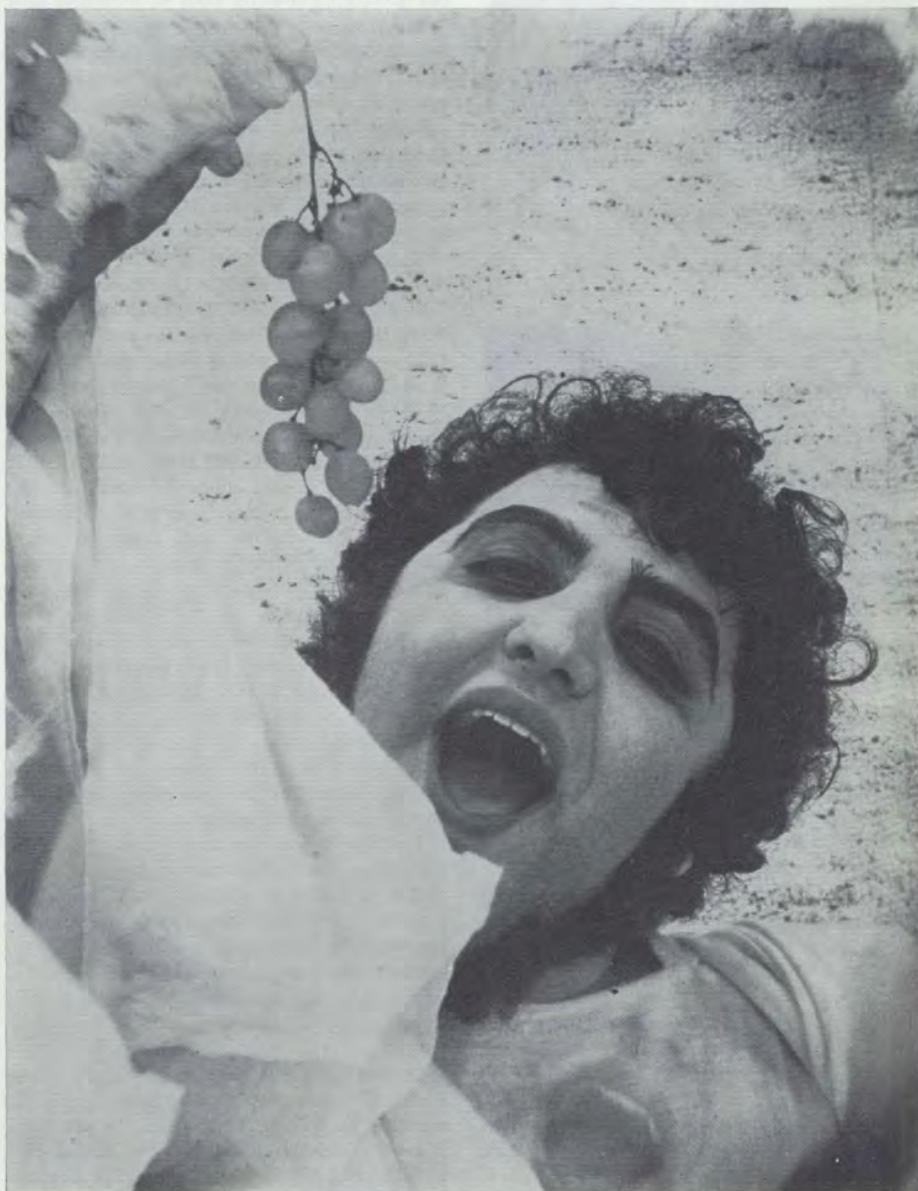
(10) The beginning of shooting on Fellini's *Satyricon*.

The opening sequence, with the camera making spooky combination tracking and zooming movements through the field around a moored airplane and a cardboard church, invokes the same feeling of death in the midst of life as the opening tunnel sequence of *8½*. The airplane, winglessly suspended in scaffolding, bears a marked resemblance to the rocket of the science-fiction movie which the director Guido was unable to 'get off the ground' in *8½*, and Guido's entrapment in the automobile is echoed when we see a black-hatted figure sitting in the window of the airplane. But more than a purely psychic stasis is involved here, for the presence of the hippies—whose brightly painted car has no wheels—puts the *Mastorna* movie into a generalised context of cultural dissolution.

When Fellini came to make *The Satyricon*, he said he thought of the three young central characters as figures out of time, divorced from history and convention, and compared them to the hippies of the (then) present day: 'They have no illusions about anything, because they do not believe in anything, but theirs is a new form of cynicism, a sort of peaceful disengagement, a healthy, concrete common sense, a singular realism.' What made *The Satyricon* seem so healthy next to Fellini's previous work, and also so disturbing, was that the young characters were totally amoral; their utter liberation, in Fellini's eyes, is both a mysteriously beautiful and a dangerous thing. Ever the Catholic moralist, he was not content to end the film on the face of young Encolpius, as he had originally planned, but cut from the living face to its frozen image on a crumbling, ruined fresco mired next to the sea, a *memento mori* symbolising the ultimate failure of any attempt at total liberation.

The pre-*Satyricon* hippies in *A Director's Notebook* seem to find Fellini in two minds. On the one hand, he identifies their rootlessness and lack of direction with his own and that of Guido/Mastorna: there is a shot of a girl sitting silently in the auto-

Fellini's cinema memory: 'A Director's Notebook'





'Never Bet the Devil Your Head'



'A Director's Notebook': Fellini and Mastroianni



'The Clowns'

use for his abandoned set, just as their culture in general attempts to find a new way of life in the shards of modern civilisation. A 'priest' has just united a couple in marriage, and another hippie has made art out of Fellini's failure—he wanders around the set reciting a poem contemptuously entitled 'Mastorna Blows'. Like them, Fellini is unable to speculate on the future (the science-fiction world of *Mastorna*), so he decides that the best way of reaching the future is to return to primitivism . . . via *The Satyricon*, which he later described as a 'science-fiction film set in the past'. But Fellini also indicates, as he does in the ending of *The Satyricon*, that the rebellious young may be making a fetish of rebellion, that they may have no alternative to offer except a return to zero and a pathetic defiance whose hollowness is defined in the childishness of the poem's title.

The hippies disappear from view, and Fellini's images become apocalyptic. The wind howls, the sky darkens, and snow begins to fall as we see Mastorna, in the black cape and hat from *8½*, walking from the airplane with a suitcase and a cello case. He leaves the cello behind just as Fellini leaves the film behind. But the director, now seen walking in a bright vernal landscape, declares that he will do the film in the future 'because it is the story I prefer the most'. He is walking toward what he jocularly calls 'the Mastorna cemetery', the warehouse which contains, among other things, a pile of rubber heads which were to be used for a scene in which 'people kill themselves by jumping out of a window'. Fellini playfully pops one of the heads apart, and his script-girl Marina Boratto (daughter of the mother-figure Caterina Boratto from *Giulietta*, who appears as a depraved matron in the slaughterhouse episode) gingerly touches it and squeals with delight. It has all become rather a silly joke. What remains, he confides, is 'a kind of remorse . . . as if a million eyes were staring out at me, waiting.'

Fellini goes from the ruins of *Mastorna* to another set of ruins, the Colosseum. But he realises that the sickness of the modern world has extended even there, infecting our view of the past: what he finds in the Colosseum is a collection of pimps, whores, transvestites, tramps and cripples, alternately hiding from his camera and screaming into it. The tracking shots along the walls and crevices of the labyrinth seem to have inspired (or to have been a first draft of) the opening sewer sequence of *The Satyricon*, which is a metaphor for the decadence of the culture the young heroes are leaving behind. (Fellini points out that Petronius visited the Colosseum while preparing to write his *Satyricon*, so things haven't changed that much.)

In his article on the making of *The Satyricon* published in the May 1970 *Playboy*, Fellini confessed that his research was very difficult. 'There existed no models, no aesthetic canons to copy; each conventionally expressive perspective was confused, upset; and if, perchance, I let myself be tempted by it, the result could be unexpected or catastrophic. The Appian Way? The ruins of the Colosseum? Picture postcards. Nothing was coming to me. . . Then one night, in the Colosseum, I saw that horrendous lunar catastrophe of stone, that immense skull devoured by time, as the

testimony of a civilisation with a different destiny. . . ' By thinking of his central characters as hippies, Fellini was able to 'regard pagan Rome with eyes unclouded by the myths and ideologies that have followed in these 2000 years of Christianity.' What gives Fellini his kinship with the hippies is reflected in the opening shot of the Colosseum segment, a view of the ruins through bustling modern traffic, repulsively overlaid with a red filter. Orson Welles defined Fellini best when he observed in 1967 that his 'limitation—which is also the source of his charm—is that he's fundamentally very provincial. His films are a small-town boy's dream of the big city. His sophistication works because it's the creation of someone who doesn't have it. But he shows dangerous signs of being a superlative artist with little to say.'

Welles undoubtedly picked up that last line from Guido's declaration that he has nothing to say, but he is going to say it anyway. The whole of *A Director's Notebook* is that search for 'something to say'. The morbidity of the first two episodes is dispelled by the introduction of a character who is both real and a lost fragment of Fellini's cinematic past: the 'man with the sack' who brings charity and compassion into the foul world of the Colosseum and into the miserable life of Cabiria (who, when the meeting was to have occurred, had just been abandoned by a client after leaving the ghastly 'procession of Divine Love'). Fellini has explained that the sequence was cut from *Cabiria* because the producer thought the film was too long; but it seems appropriate that it was cut so that it can be resurrected now at a time of renewal.

Fellini returns to his innocent childhood dreams of wickedness in the cinema memory which ends with himself, as a little boy in his father's arms, staring rapt at the screen as the camera zooms through the midst of the crowd. 'For me,' Fellini has said, 'a movie house is a room bubbling with noises and odours; chestnuts, the urine of children; that feeling of the end of the world, of disaster.' The orange-tinted film the little Fellini is watching, like the circus the little Fellini enters at the beginning of *The Clowns*, is a grotesque vision of lechery and violence which looks merely droll to us but which is appalling to the child. The film has unsettling correspondences to the fantasies of childhood: a grossly fat, baby-faced Roman is eating grapes out of a woman's hand when his mother comes to pull him away by the ear. Without warning, she stabs him in the back, and then leers into the camera with her tongue hanging out in the patented Fellini image for female lust. As we stare into the flashing blue lamp of the projector, we are made to feel the hypnotic effect the experience is having on the little boy.

This childlike view of the world's nonsensical wickedness is debased into childishness in the next three segments (Genius, the subway, the whores and the truck drivers), which are on an even lower level of sophistication than the silent movie Fellini parodies. This is the Fellini who would be in control if, as in *Never Bet the Devil Your Head*, he couldn't find 'something to say'. It is reported that Fellini takes, or used to take, Genius seriously as a

mobile, just like Guido, as the wind blows and a jet flies into a brilliant setting sun. But on the other hand, Fellini is exploring the possibility that these hippies, like his projected *Satyricon* characters, might provide an alternative to the myths of Western culture. They are, after all, finding a new

medium, but if his appearance here is any indication (Genius, who looks and acts like Liberace, scorns the ancient Romans as 'very vulgar people'), the director has been barking up a very wrong tree.

The segment with Mastroianni, who was to have been Mastorna, is a merciless guying of his post-*Dolce Vita* image as a 'Latin lover'. It proves Mastroianni to be a remarkably good sport, and it also allows him to reciprocate the insult by criticising Fellini, in an eerily Pirandellian scene, for not having the 'faith' to let him play Mastorna. Fellini hovers around the edges of Mastroianni's adulators with the look of a man who has created a Frankenstein monster. It is as if the narcissistic character he created in *8½* has actually taken possession of the actor, who, in fact, dons his Guido hat at one point. Mastroianni wears the same look of bemused submission as the actor in *Never Bet the Devil Your Head*. When the busload of women pulls up outside his villa, there is a pan along the row of obscenely excited old faces; seen through the green glass of the windows, they look like zombies, and again we are reminded of the opening of *8½*, with Guido suffocating in his automobile. Fellini cryptically remarks that Mastroianni has 'all the virtues and all the faults of the ancient Romans'; but this sequence has less to do with his research for *The Satyricon* than with a reminder, lest he weaken, of the stasis of the Mastorna period.

In the screen test, we see Mastroianni idly drawing a bow across Mastorna's cello, making a moaning sound, as a horde of sycophants scurry around preparing him for the role and the camera tracks aimlessly back and forth in front of him, conveying a palpable feeling of tension and imprisonment. 'When you made *La Dolce Vita*, wasn't I your character?' Mastroianni asks the director while sitting at a make-up table. 'In *8½*, wasn't I you?' Yes, says Fellini impatiently, but that was in the past. Mastroianni replies, 'You are scared,' adding that he would become Mastorna if only Fellini believed that he was Mastorna.

After this we take the plunge into the frighteningly real world of *The Satyricon*, the camera tracking through the empty slaughterhouse from the viewpoint of an animal being led to the cutting tables, with animal bellowing on the soundtrack. Fellini is dragging himself kicking and screaming into his new film.

It is his practice, when preparing a film, to put an advertisement in the Roman papers announcing an open audition. As he has explained: 'For me, working on a film is a journey—I've said this so often that I hardly believe it any more. You don't take a journey in the abstract, but consider the exigences that come up from hour to hour, your own mood, things that are impossible to predict . . . you must put yourself in the hands of the thing that is to be born . . . I call in people; I have hundreds of faces pass before me. It's a kind of ceremony to create an atmosphere . . . I see a hundred in order to get two for the film; I compare clothing, dialects, whiskers, tics, postures. Some poor man may be so happy because I insist on having him photographed—and the only thing that interests me is a picture of his eye-glasses. At a certain point, I've had

enough of the office and of the people passing in front of me, and then I begin the tests. This is the definite phase of the ceremony. At this point, I know that in a short time I have to begin the film.' What is needed, then, is the courage to let the real world take over and put a definite shape to the chaotic, ultimately sterile world of the imagination. Fellini's audition may seem chaotic to the casual observer, but to him this is a process of discovery.

When Fellini/Guido claims that he has 'nothing to say', he is actually defining the role of the artist to be less an arbiter of reality than a passionate interpreter of reality (or, to use Fellini's favourite metaphor, a ring-master). Leonardo-like, Fellini takes sustenance from faces and from the physical, even clinical, detail of the human body. He will always be a neo-realist at heart, even when his researches take him into the realm of the surreal. This is why it is absurd to take Fellini's work with too much solemnity; as exaggerated as it may seem, it is too close to life. And this is why Andrew Sarris' characterisation of Fellini as 'the Busby Berkeley of metaphysics' is not as damning as it might sound.

With uncharacteristic humility, Fellini avoids showing us his own face during the audition sequence, although we once see his hands putting a woman's photograph into a filing envelope. We watch the procession of faces from a vantage point behind his desk, next to his own chair, as if we were doing the research with him. His voice ranges from affection to amusement to condescension to vexation as the people flow past: a frumpy woman (later to appear as his 'script girl' in *The Clowns*) reading one of her poems; a businessman type reading from a Balkan newspaper; an aging dress-maker giving him a youthful pin-up of herself; a sluttish-looking girl asking him, 'Tell me what you really think about women—should I be a virgin or not?' (his reply is tacitly revealed when we realise that she played one of the whores along the Appian Way); a man touting his son, who looks like a pinhead and whistles like a blackbird

(the boy is the 'sound man' in *The Clowns*); a con-man who tries to sell Fellini a painting by 'an artist greater than Raphael' whose name, unfortunately, slips his mind; a balding man who says, 'If I had a wig, it would change my whole life,' and gives Fellini a sample of his hair; a really sluttish-looking girl who says she played Joan of Arc, twice, in Sunday school; an effeminate drama student who gives an hysterical rendition of Chekhov; a pretty girl; an exotic woman who says she dances with trained snakes (and suddenly appears in a sexy costume, as if Fellini is daydreaming); and a fat matron with her two muscle-bound sons, who strip off their shirts and strike beefcake poses.

Finally a woman in black with a ravaged face tells Fellini that his films 'express exactly the same thing as my music,' and pulls out an accordion. 'Is it very long?' he asks wearily. As she starts playing her 'Fortune, Where Art Thou?' in the manner of Nino Rota, the camera zooms all the way out to make her look small and pathetic against the wall of the office. Marina Boratto enters, looks towards Fellini and stifles a smile. But the camera slowly zooms in to a large close-up of the woman passionately belting out the song, and Fellini muses, 'Yes, I know it must seem sinful, cruel, but no, I am very fond of all these characters who are always chasing after me, following me from one film to another. They are all a little mad, I know that. They say they need me, but the truth is that I need them more. Their human qualities are rich, comic, and sometimes very moving.'

Under these words, the camera pans rapidly from face to face of a new group of characters, with the accordion playing underneath. All of them are talking at once and smiling, from a monstrously fat bespectacled man with his arm around his little boy to a vain curly-haired girl spinning around the office in a little dance. It is a fresco of human absurdity and loveliness, and it is all Fellini has to say. At the end of *A Director's Notebook*, we see him back in action on the set, brash, jovial, and liberated.

'A Director's Notebook'



THE FILM INDUSTRY AND THE

EEC

Neville Hunnings

The first thing to realise when considering the film industry in its relation to the Common Market is the exceptional position it occupies. Many Community commentators have referred to it and to the shipbuilding industry as being alike in that both need special treatment, financial assistance and protection against the rigours of the competition rules. This now appears also to be the view of the Commission, although only five or six years ago many senior officials still thought the film industry would have to stand on its own feet or die. Similarly, more than one source within the British film industry has expressed the view that it will not follow the general pattern of other industries when Britain joins the EEC, but that it will show peculiar characteristics of its own.

As far as the Community is concerned, such an attitude is an example of the pragmatic leaven which exists deep down under the dogmatic crust, and which has been seen in the reversal of the Commission's attitude towards the coal and steel industries—which are being encouraged to merge and concentrate (now that they have become weak) instead of being kept separated (as they were originally when they were strong).

The Community has been feeling its way on the film industry very gingerly since the early 1960s, and even now has done little more than skim over the surface. The devising of a full film programme, discussed in academic and trade meetings in 1961, 1962 and 1968, remains a fairly low priority for the future. An article on this subject must, then, combine the present with future prognostication in a way which is irritatingly familiar to students of British entry into the Common Market.

A pattern can, however, be discerned in the writings and discussions and gives a rough guideline. First, the basic effect of the most fundamental part of the EEC, the customs union, is to require the removal of discrimination as between member states. This will require the adjustment of certain protective measures and, somewhat more subtly, the application of aid machinery in a way which does not emphasise nationality. Secondly, the comparatively weak state of

the film industry will require alleviation of the fairly stern rules against subsidy and industrial favouritism. The Community has an anti-lame-duck policy, just like the present British Government; but unlike it, it does not go so far as to deny the propriety of aiding the film industry. Nevertheless, one can expect it to move towards a system of Community aid, in place of existing national aids; although, in a parallel area, member states have shown themselves reluc-

tant to transfer *regional* aids to the Community authorities. Perhaps there is a very proper factor working here—the feeling that aid-granting is a political rather than administrative act, and that until the Community acquires a democratic element it is not fit to handle such political hot potatoes.

The third thread in the pattern is the 'Défi Américain', which appears in perhaps its most powerful form in film affairs. Not only is it necessary to pull the industry up by its bootstraps out of financial starvation, it is also desirable to break the dominance of American interests in the European film industries, and particularly in distribution. This will in the end mean Community action, and Jean-Claude Batz, in his report prepared for the 1968 Brussels colloquium, placed at the centre of his proposal for an EEC common film policy the establishment of a strong Community-wide distribution network.

Paradoxically, the British film industry anticipates less difficulty from the EEC than from the policies of the British government, in particular the near destruction of the NFFC, the possible abolition of the British Film Fund, and the effect on international trade union protection of film workers of the new Industrial Relations Act. In some respects, indeed, Britain is moving into the position of Germany before 1967, before the latter adopted a policy of aiding the film industry and when it pursued a lone but effective opposition to Community assistance to the cinema. The Commission's change of heart occurred just after Germany's, and it could be that the new British attitude will hinder still further the adoption of a positive Community policy.

The key to the whole situation is, in fact, the National Film Finance Corporation—even more so since the publication last autumn of its prospectus for a National Film Finance Consortium and the formation of the National Film Trustee Company Ltd. For in many ways, the system followed by the Corporation hitherto, and the more sophisticated new arrangements, are precisely what the Community has been moving towards. Did I not know that this was not in John Terry's mind at the time, I would have suspected that he and his colleague, Ian Smyth, had designed the new arrangements specifically as a working experiment for a future EEC system.

The starting point must be the existing pattern in the six present member countries. They all impose high admission taxes on cinemas. They also place the main burden of their film aid on straight subsidies, partly to reward artistic success, partly to reinforce financial success (as with Britain's Eady money). Only in Italy and France do special credit facilities have a role to play. Writers within the EEC lay some stress on the undesirably high fiscal policy of the film industry and on the difficulty or impossibility of seriously considering its removal. They also emphasise the inefficiency of subsidy systems—as with the Common Agricultural Policy, the aid money goes to the successful producers (and entrepreneurs) while those that need help do not get it. The palliative adopted so far has been the linking of some of the aid to artistic excellence; but that introduces a bureaucratic discretion which is not healthy in a general aid system, although it can quite satisfactorily play a minor role. It also opens the door, and has done, to an indirect form of censorship of great efficacy.

Even so, the system has the further disadvantage that it in effect subsidises the film company rather than the film, since the aid money goes into the company's coffers on the basis of its previous films to be used for setting up its future productions as it chooses. In practice, the main value of aid funds in all West European countries, except perhaps Sweden, has been to attract American money. And the main side effect has been to encourage co-production arrangements in order that a film might benefit from aid granted by each of the co-producing countries. This effect can be seen particularly clearly in Britain, where Eady money was one of the factors attracting recent and heavy US investment.

The most thoroughly worked out scheme to remedy this state of affairs was put forward by Batz in 1968.* He proposed the replacement of national subsidies by a Community film credit bank. Since the key to a healthy European film industry is distribution, it is important to build up one or more indigenous distribution chains which may break the American stranglehold. This would be done by requiring a producer, when applying for credit from the bank, to join to his application a 'European' distributor

to whom distribution rights in the future film had been ceded for the whole of the Community in return for a minimum guaranteed return. A 'European' distributor would have to be free from control by or subordination to non-Community sources of any kind.

The film bank, which in the early stages (or, as John Terry has cogently argued, permanently) might operate nationally rather than centrally for the whole Community, would advance funds on the security of future box-office receipts. And in order to encourage other sources of finance, more flexible repayment patterns would be used: instead of the horizontal 'layer' system (first lender gets all his money back before second lender gets anything, etc.), the vertical 'corridor' system (lenders recover *pari passu* until receipts equal total loans), or a mixture of the two.

But in order to introduce such 'revolutionary' ideas, there was a major drawback to be overcome. One of the serious failings of the French civil code and its derivatives (including the civil codes of the Six), but from which English law is free, is that movable property must be transferred to the lender if it is to bear a charge or mortgage. Generally, this creates difficulties for successive lenders; and in the film context, transfer of the property—either the physical negative or the notional copyright—can lead to problems in a film's exploitation.

To overcome these hurdles, France introduced in 1944 a National Film Register (operated by the Centre National de la Cinématographie) in which most financial transactions relating to the film are entered. Entry on the register is conclusive as to priority, so that a lender who has not entered his contract cannot subsequently claim prior rights over a later lender who did register his loan. The scheme has been successful, and has attracted private finance into the film industry to a significant degree. This success, combined with the ideas of Batz, Claude Degand and others, inspired the Community to propose its extension to all the member states (Italy had in fact had a less comprehensive variant for several decades) as a necessary preliminary to freedom of establishment in the field of distribution services. After several years of preparation this culminated in a draft directive of the Commission to the Council of 27th July 1971, which is now passing through the legislative process (together with the long awaited draft directive on distribution services).

The British position on these developments is simple. As is not unknown in other EEC spheres, the Community countries devote a lot of huffing and puffing to overcoming internal structural difficulties so as to reach a solution which has been operating happily in Britain for a long time. The scheme which Batz needed 130 pages to analyse and argue is in essentials the very system which has been functioning in Britain since the NFFC was formed in 1949, and which has allowed the Corporation, by recycling its funds, to operate effectively for 22 years on a grand total of just under £3.7 million (excluding the British Lion special rescue operation)—as compared with Eady money subsidy amounting to £4.2 million for 1970 alone.

Not only has the credit bank system been an intrinsic part of the British film scene, but the developments introduced during 1971 have to some extent anticipated realisation of other aspects of the Batz scheme, in particular the film register. This has in practice been kept by the Registrar of Companies, the charges on a film being registered under the name of the production company. Admittedly, English (but not Scottish) law is in this respect much more flexible than the Roman law systems of the Six; but in addition there is a long-standing habit of entering charges on a register which goes back at least to the 1870s (the Sale of Goods Act). The British film industry has experienced no problems hitherto in securing its creditors. Nevertheless, Mme Lucy Willemetz, in her authoritative survey of national film registers,† concludes that a film register would be an improvement on the companies register in that it would enable loans to be secured on a particular film rather than on the overall trading of the production company. The NFFC has recently gone some way to meeting that point, and has in effect created what could well turn into the British National Film Register when the directive is passed.

As part of its rethinking in 1971, the Corporation devised a scheme for involving private investment funds in its work. This was subsequently semi-sabotaged by the government through a calling in of the Corporation's existing funds, including future earnings, and their replacement by the offer of a 25% matching grant from public funds to a maximum of £1 million for all future activities. If the new National Film Finance Consortium gets off the ground, it will have three features which are particularly significant in a Community context.

The first of these is the formation of the National Film Trustee Company Ltd. This body, through a trust deed, takes over all the producer's rights under his distribution agreement and is given by the producer a first legal charge on the film for the benefit of all lenders. The Trustee Co. thenceforth acts as a central supervisory body on behalf of the lenders over production and distribution of the film, and as a cash distributing body to the lenders as the receipts come in. The trust deed contains not only a list of all documents of title which authenticate the producer's rights to produce the film, but also a list and details of all loans made towards its financing. The trust deed, therefore, provides the means of balancing the interests of all lenders between themselves as well as an extremely flexible means of sorting out as a whole all the financial elements in the production of the film. The deed is in effect performing the function of the film register.

The second innovation relates to the repayment pattern, which follows the 'corridor' system, with the distributor getting 25% of the gross receipts throughout the film's commercial life and the remaining 75% being shared rateably between all the investors until total receipts amount to 1.8 times the film's production costs. At that stage the share for the investors drops to 50% and the remaining 25% goes to the producer as his profit.

*Contribution à une politique commune de la cinématographie dans le Marché Commun (Brussels, 1968).

†Les registres publics de la cinématographie (Lausanne, 1970).

The third feature of the scheme prepares the way for the central condition of the Batz plan, in that the trust deed requires the simultaneous conclusion of a distribution agreement, under the control of the trustees, which is immediately assigned to the Trustee Co. No further machinery would be required for the inclusion of a condition that such a distributor should be European.

It should be emphasised that the Batz proposals are private and, although representing the most advanced thinking on the matter (particularly in the Commission), they have not been officially adopted either by the Community or by governments or film industries. Indeed, the instinctive reaction of most countries to the problems of the straight subsidy has been to introduce qualitative criteria—the 'clause de médiocrité'. This is, rather depressingly, the line being followed by the German film industry, for instance, in its present discussions for reform of the film aid law which must be completely revised by the end of 1972. But with three major film-producing countries of the enlarged Community already operating special film banks and increasingly emphasising the role of credit provision in their aid programmes (the Italian film bank was granted last August an additional sum of £8½ million to be used over the next five years, over and above its 'ordinary' fund of £3½ million), it can confidently be expected that this approach will gain ascendancy. In this it will be helped by the five-year-old International Committee for Motion Picture Credit (CICREC), which now includes not only Spanish and Italian members but also banking delegates from France, Germany and Britain (John Terry).

Both the system of direct subsidies and that of special credit facilities infringe, strictly speaking, the subsidy provisions of the Rome Treaty (arts. 92-94). But 'aid intended to facilitate the development of certain economic activities' (art. 92 (3)(c)) is permissible, and it is generally agreed now that the film industry is covered by that provision.

What is probably not so permitted is the Eady levy—not because it is a form of aid but because of the way its funds are acquired (through a levy on the exhibitor). In 1970 the Court of Justice of the European Communities (case 47/69) considered a precisely similar French scheme of aid to the textile industry, which was financed through a tax on the retail sale of certain textile products, both domestic and foreign, and held that the Commission was right in ordering the French government either to put an end to the whole scheme or to alter its method of financing (e.g. to a direct subsidy from public funds). Whether the Commission takes the same view of the British Film Fund will depend upon a number of intangibles, but it is difficult fully to share the sanguine attitude of the Department of Trade and Industry on the matter. However, the contributory system typified by Eady is not unknown among the Six, and the Comité de l'Industrie Cinématographique Européenne (CICE), which groups together the three branches of the film industry in the six member states, in fact proposed in 1962 a scheme for 'autofinancing the film industry' which amounted to an Eady system writ large on a unified Community scale.

Entertainment Tax

In discussion of possible harmonisation of film aid systems in the Six, much emphasis has sometimes been laid on the question of taxation. All the Six levy admission taxes in one form or another, but generally these are now being absorbed into the value added tax (VAT). Indeed, just after Holland adopted the VAT cinemas were threatened with having to pay both entertainment tax and VAT and had to be given special relief to avoid such double taxation; the Italians too in the VAT bill, which has been before Parliament since February 1971, propose to add VAT to the existing taxes. There are also other film taxes, such as the French distribution tax (*tax de sortie*). In Britain, entertainment tax, which was instituted during the Great War in 1916, was abolished some years ago after an arduous campaign, and cinema tickets now bear no tax apart from the Eady levy.

The Community, as a first stage towards fiscal harmonisation, has required all member states to introduce an added value tax to replace existing turnover tax systems. Denmark and Norway (and Sweden) have already introduced the VAT, Eire now has a Bill before the Dáil, and the British Bill is to be introduced this spring. At present, the individual states have full discretion in operating the system. But one of its essential characteristics is that, as opposed to purchase tax, and in spite of its name, it applies to the supply of services as well as the sale of goods. Also, as opposed to purchase tax, which is applied selectively as an active instrument of fiscal policy, VAT is applied as widely as possible and is fiscally neutral, being solely a revenue producer. Consequently, in all the existing member states it is being charged on cinema admissions (it is also charged on books and in most of them on the periodical press—in Sweden it is even charged, at 17.65%, on second-hand books). In France the VAT rate for cinemas is 17.6%, with art houses bearing a reduced rate of 7.5%; cine clubs are also subject to VAT but have a somewhat privileged position. Other rates are 6% (Belgium), 9.5% (Holland), 5% (Germany), 6% (Italy, from 1st July 1972) and 5.26% (Irish Bill). Presumably, on entry Britain would have the same discretion as the existing member countries and could exclude cinema admissions from VAT or zero-rate them.

The Commission, however, is now embarked on preparations for the next two stages of fiscal harmonisation: unification of the tax bases, and then unification of the actual rates of tax. Proposals for unification of the tax base are to be submitted to the Council before the end of 1972; and it is likely, in view of the existing situation in the Six, that cinema admissions will be compulsorily subjected to VAT. Indeed, officials in the Commission now preparing the draft have specifically said that this will be the case. Proposals to harmonise actual tax rates are due to be presented by the middle of 1973.

The present UK Government is not likely to raise any objections to this without a great deal of prodding, for in the green paper on the VAT published in March 1971 it is

stated that 'consumer services such as entertainment' would be covered by the proposed British VAT in any event. This was the subject of a protesting memorandum submitted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 23rd July 1971 by Hugh Jenkins MP, on behalf of 26 representative organisations in the theatre and cinema industries. The VAT would be in addition to, and not in substitution for, the Eady levy and would in effect amount to a revival of the old entertainment tax.

Co-Production

It is well known that co-production arrangements between France and Italy have been highly successful, while similar arrangements between the UK and these two countries have been a failure. Only three films have been made under the Anglo-Italian co-production treaty and Joe Janni, producer of two of them (*In Search of Gregory* and *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*), attributes this in part to the artificiality of stories and casting in order to meet the needs of the co-production system and rules. Interestingly, he does not believe the reason is hostile attitudes of the British unions.

The precise form to be taken by closer inter-state co-operation within the new Common Market is at present quite unclear. Fears have been expressed that a spread of the co-production formula will lead to a Community equivalent of the mid-Atlantic film, a 'Riviera' hybrid. Experience so far does not entirely bear that out (most of Resnais' feature films, for instance, have been multiple co-productions). To be sure, some recent Anglo-German television co-productions (such as Paul Temple) have tended towards the 'Advertisers' Glossy', but that trend was visible before moving to Germany. Indeed, an Anglo-German co-production treaty might make more sense in cultural terms, to take Janni's point, than those with France and Italy—unless we go back to Dornford Yates.

But as the Community film policy begins to fill out, there will be less need for co-production as an organised form. Its primary purpose has always been to obtain dual or multiple nationality for a film and so benefit from aid money and quota treatment. As film nationality of a member state gives way to nationality of the Community as a whole, intra-Community co-production will become what the 1st directive calls co-participation, and the special treaties between member states will at best lose their *raison d'être*, and at worst become discriminatory in breach of the Rome Treaty. This process will be hastened when not only is there full freedom of establishment, services and capital but also the 'Societas Europea' or 'European-type company', the proposal for which is now before the Council, has been adopted. For then transnational company mergers will have a simple and convenient procedure, and some at least of the bigger companies will probably take advantage of this to create Community-wide production (and distribution) companies. That will not obviate entirely the need for consortium financing of individual films, and co-participation deals obviously have a long future.

Nationality

The redundancy of co-production is directly linked to the question of nationality, of eligibility for state benefits which are restricted to 'nationals'. It is obviously, therefore, of central importance to determine to what extent member states may continue to favour their own national productions and thereby discriminate against those of other member states. As Nicholas Ridley said at a recent meeting, only when national benefits go will co-production lose its value.

It is not surprising, then, that the rules on nationality of films, although still incomplete, are among the most important of the Community films legislation. They are relevant in three contexts: (a) circulation of films; (b) quota rules; and (c) aids to national production.

Circulation (1st directive, 15th October 1963): Shorts, actualities and educational and documentary features have unrestricted entry into and distribution and exploitation within member states. Entertainment features, in original version (i.e. undubbed), having the nationality of one member state likewise have unrestricted entry and exploitation in the others. Thus for such films customs restrictions and distributors' quota are not permitted; exhibitors' quota is expressly saved. Special transitional rules apply to dubbing.

Quota (2nd directive, 13th May 1965): Import quotas on dubbed films having the nationality of a member state are also abolished. Screen quotas may be retained, or even introduced, but no distinction may be made between national films and those of other member states (clause 8 of the new European Communities Bill deals specifically with this). Special rules apply to specialised cinemas but, like the rules on dubbing (and for the same reason), these do not apply in Britain.

Nationality (1st and 2nd directives): For both circulation and quota, the rules as to nationality of a film are laid down in detail in the 1st directive (arts. 3-4). These criteria define nationality as a link with a single member state and there is as yet no attempt to create a Community nationality for films: the rules are based on equal treatment of foreign (i.e. member country) films rather than on assimilation of all into one category. This is important, because member states are still entitled to require the use of their own nationals in the making of the film.

At the other extreme, the use of non-EEC citizens in key creative positions is carefully restricted, and a non-EEC director is only permitted in exceptional cases. The position of expatriate film-makers is thus somewhat insecure; although if they belong to the same language group (e.g. French-speaking, English-speaking) they are treated as though they were a national, and this would seem to protect the position of people like Joseph Losey, or even Sam Peckinpah.

Aids (Regulation 1612/68 and 4th directive, 29th September 1970): The position is different, and simpler, with regard to national aids to film production, for there the rules are linked to movement of people rather than of goods. Thus where a member state makes the granting of benefits to undertakings

conditional upon a minimum percentage of national workers being employed (as is the case under the Eady system), citizens of other member states are equated with national workers (which the new bill fails to do). Likewise, restrictions which result in discriminatory treatment of foreign (i.e. other member state) producers are unlawful; and this is specifically applied to the requirement in French law that a production company should be of French nationality if it is to qualify for French financial aid.

Movement of Labour

Needless to say, a central element in the Community rules on the cinema is freedom of movement of labour. But this appears to be more important than it actually is, since in practice there is not a great deal of trans-frontier movement in this field. It has recently been said that in Italy practically the only consequence has been greater mobility of actors.

Workers on a regular wage or salary basis have full freedom of movement and must be treated on the same basis as nationals in all member countries. This applies not only to state agencies and legislation but also to employers and unions. The Commission has even gone so far as to bring about the withdrawal of private social discriminations against foreign workers in South Germany, acting as a sort of Race Relations Board, though on somewhat dubious legal grounds. The important factor is discrimination, and so long as that is not present restrictive labour practices, even a closed shop, will not be impeded by the freedom of movement rules. It is perhaps no wonder that a high union official in London fears more problems from the new Industrial Relations Act than from Community rules.

Progress on non-wage-earning labour has been slower and comes under the heading of freedom of establishment and freedom to supply services. The distribution and production branches of the film industry are now completely covered (or will be when the 6th directive has been enacted); distributors of one member state cannot, for example, be prevented from joining the appropriate trade organisation of another (e.g. the KRS) on the same basis as nationals, including the right to stand for office. Rules in Belgium and Italy requiring film producers to be of Belgian or Italian nationality have had to be repealed.

The exhibition branch has hardly been touched, which is perhaps as well. It is only cinemas specialising in the exclusive projection of foreign films in the original language which are affected; but this does not apply where subtitling rather than dubbing is the normal practice, as in the applicant countries. A 7th directive is now being prepared by the Commission to bring into the net ancillary services such as film processing.

Censorship

The suggestion has been made, by Catherine Sieklucka among others,* that film censorship should also be harmonised, if only because differing censorship criteria create

distortions of marketing patterns. This would be unlikely even within the present Community, with its variation between the German self-censorship (FSK), the French municipal plus central censorship, the strict Italian censorship plus prosecution system, and the forthcoming partial abolition in Holland. It would be almost impossible after the addition of Denmark, which has abolished adult censorship altogether, and of Britain, whose system is quite unique and incompatible with any of the others. The only type of harmonisation that might be at all possible would be abolition as regards adults. The recent French proposals (echoed in the new Italian censorship bill) put forward by the Minister of Culture, for a Quebec-type solution with no censorship for adults but notification of dubious films to the prosecuting authorities, constitutes a significant development in that direction. But the strongly illiberal backlash at present rife in Britain, and the still severe Irish censorship, would for the moment neutralise any reform tendencies from the Latin countries. Nor should it be ignored that the European Parliament, in its January 1972 session, claimed the right not only to discuss the subject of drugs but also to place co-ordination of the fight against psychotropic drugs firmly in Community hands; during the debate frequent reference was made to morals in a way which could easily embrace the content of films. And the following week European officials took it upon themselves to protest against the showing in Brussels of the Italian film *Secret Africa* and to propose to African diplomats that they should complain to the Belgian government.

Common Film Policy

The EEC Commission in its memorandum on the Action Programme for the 2nd Stage 1962-65 said that a common policy would be adopted for the cinema, comprising constructive solutions at Community level. No such common policy has yet been adopted, or even drafted. Nevertheless, the Community is clearly moving gradually towards a position in which such a policy will begin to be feasible, and increasing discussion of the subject can be expected. In particular, the Commission has included in its detailed programme for 1972 the continuation of efforts to harmonise sectoral aid legislation in the field of cinematography; and M. Lorient has given as specific subjects for future action the harmonisation of credits, creation of a European Film Fund and the development of a European distributor network.

The expansion of the EEC is not likely to raise any particular new problems, since the applicant countries do not contain any peculiarities in their film industries (in exhibition it might be a little different, since both the British circuit system and the Norwegian municipally run cinemas are fairly unique). The applicants have a number of devices which may be useful to the search for Community solutions; and similarly they may have to lose some of them in the interests of EEC unity.

*In her invaluable book, *Les aides à l'industrie cinématographique dans la Communauté économique européenne* (Paris, 1967).



ZOLTAN HUSZARIK'S



Scenes from *Sindbad*, a first feature by Zoltán Huszár
Krudý; photographed by Sándor Sára. Ma



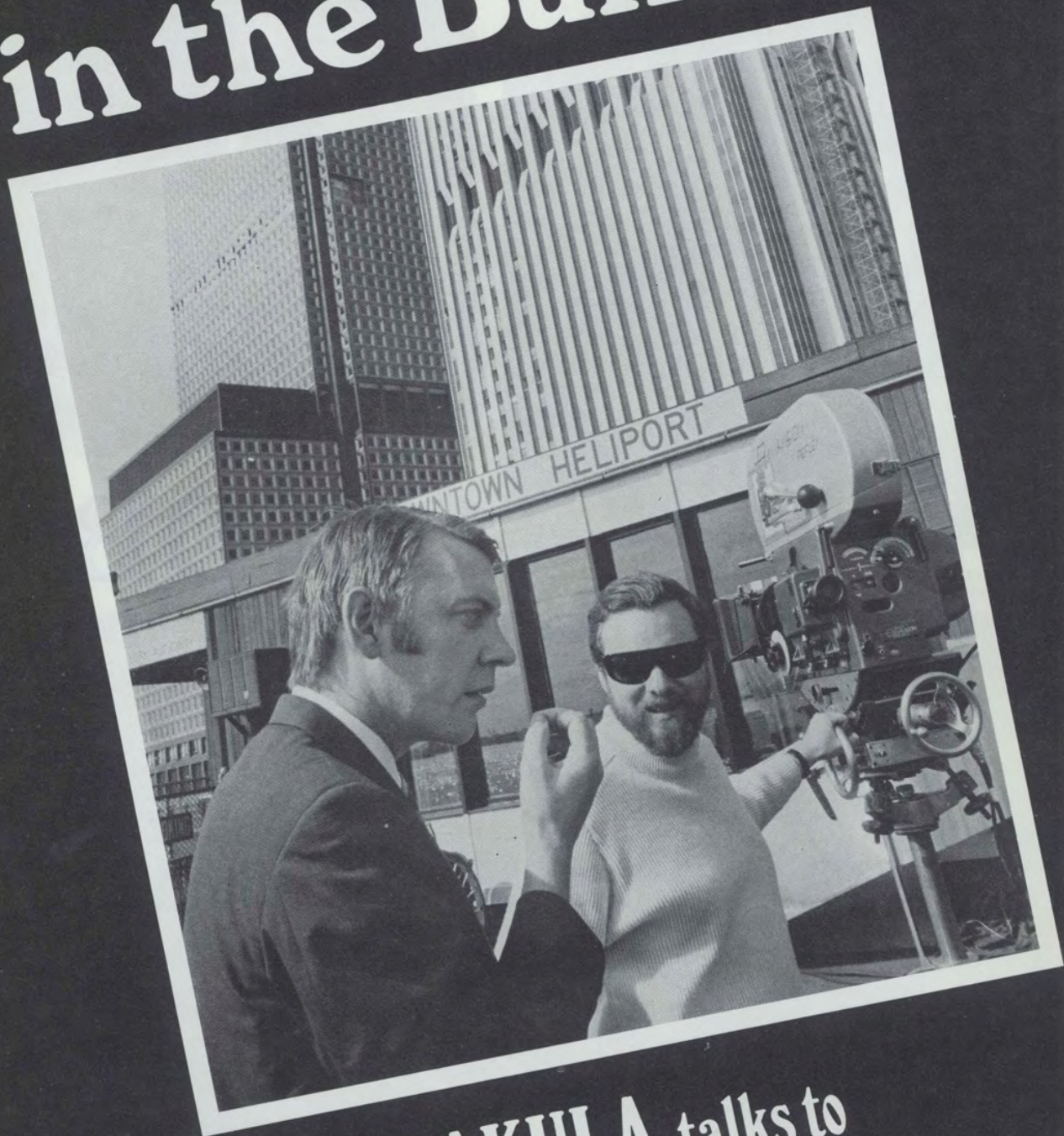


SINDBAD

ik, based on the stories of the Hungarian writer Gyula
i Kuttna writes about the film on page 69.



Not a Garbo or a Gilbert in the Bunch



ALAN PAKULA talks to
Tom Milne

For several years, Alan J. Pakula was simply a name familiar from the credits of Robert Mulligan films. Born in 1928, he went to Hollywood, after graduating at Yale, as assistant to the head of Warner Brothers cartoons. There his stage work at the Circle Theatre brought a move to M-G-M as an apprentice in production. With Paramount, in 1957, he produced his first film, Robert Mulligan's *Fear Strikes Out*, and continued the association through *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Love With the Proper Stranger*, *Baby the Rain Must Fall*, *Inside Daisy Clover*, *Up the Down Staircase* and *The Stalking Moon*. In 1969, *The Sterile Cuckoo* (Pookie in Britain) signalled the arrival of a new director. Last year came *Klute*, and the rest, as they say . . .

I never wanted to be a producer. It was sheer accident, and I was passive about it for so long it bewilders me. There were a lot of satisfactions, of course, but I've always wanted to direct, ever since I was seventeen—and that's fairly young to feel a mission, get so close to it, and then avoid it or seem to avoid it until middle age is starting to set in.

When I went to Yale and majored in drama there, I remember directing a one-act Chekhov farce. I was working with much older actors—well, they were about twenty-five or so, veterans back from the war—and I can still remember the enormous sense of exaltation. I had never felt that happy in my entire life. I used to leave rehearsals and go down the street with great goat-like leaps, like something from a Thomas Wolfe novel. It was extraordinary—I just delighted in working with actors.

I also thought of being a psychoanalyst. I think because I am basically enormously curious about people. The difference between me then and now is that at that age I found it much easier to categorise people. Now, the more I know about them, the more sense of mystery I feel, and I don't have any desire to pigeon-hole people that way. The curiosity exists for its own sake, and I think that's really why I'm a director. And there's also . . . I remember at seventeen the feeling that people were finding things in themselves they could not have found without me. I was a sort of catalytic agent, and it gave me an extraordinary . . . sense of power, I guess you'd say. I suppose at the age of seventeen I suddenly felt like a father figure, and it was probably important to me, having had a dominating father. Besides which it was just pure fun.

At that point I was more interested in theatre than in films. In the academic world films were looked down upon a bit. Quite different from today—I'm on the other side of a generation gap there. Now there are times when I almost wish that films weren't treated with quite such reverence. The director as star is a direct outgrowth of this whole new seriousness about films, and while it is a marvellously healthy sign for the cinema and a great compliment to the director, my concern is that it can lead to a certain kind of self-consciousness. It can lead to people with

particular talents and gifts being taken seriously as intellectuals, when one may have little to do with the other. It can certainly encourage directors to a sense of self-importance that is not unlike the old Hollywood, where you had an image to protect once you were successful. So many of the best films were done because someone just wanted to do them, without worrying whether it was really important enough. John Ford, I think, said that the most important thing is to enjoy it.

You're getting me at a time when I'm selecting my next film . . . I think finally that whatever I do is for very personal reasons. When I did *Klute*, I did it because I was attracted to the theme, the chance to do that kind of melodrama, exploring that kind of girl, that kind of relationship and search; but I also knew it would make certain demands on me in terms of cinematic technique and visual storytelling and control, which I thought important for me in my second film as director. I felt that it ran the risk of looking like a piece of tabloid, that it could easily turn into a B film. It was also a film I thought I was strangely cast for, and all this was part of the attraction. The film I've just done, *The Widower*, which is not finished yet, is actually one I started work on before *Klute*. And again it's entirely different. It's a very tiny film—when I say tiny, I mean intimate. Whatever it is or isn't, I don't think it has a false sense of itself, or tries to be more important than it is. I think as a director—and as a spectator—I value a sense of scale almost as much as anything. Perhaps it's a reaction to Hollywood, where scale means that if you spend more than x amount on a picture it's a big picture and it's got to look big. I like to make films with a sense of proportion, the size that belongs to the subject, and that's something you have inside your head.

I started out on *Klute* feeling that it couldn't be more different from *The Sterile Cuckoo*, which deals with a much more innocent world in terms of style and everything, and this was one of the reasons for doing it. But halfway through I suddenly realised—much to my surprise because I consider myself a fairly rational fellow about what I do—that in both films I was dealing with a rather repressed male who seems organised and orderly, who becomes involved with a compulsive but enormously

alive girl who acts out all of her neuroses, is exciting, has a certain kind of wit and hysterical freedom that he is incapable of, and who lights up his world and almost pulls him into her self-destruction. Now, Pookie Adams and Bree Daniels are very different ladies, and certainly Jerry Payne and John Klute are very different, but there is a kind of essence in them that is alike.

By Indirections. . .

I hadn't really thought about the elliptical approach you mention as common to both films, but it's true. I *am* oblique, I think that has to do with my own nature. I like trying to do things which work on many levels, because I think it is terribly important to give an audience a lot of things they may not get as well as those they will, so that finally the film does take on a texture and is not just simplistic communication.

For instance, the reason for that first scene in *Klute*—the family gathering—is that we are going into a world where families do not exist, an underside of people without roots that seems to exist divorced from the whole middle class society. I guess that's kind of Hitchcock—where do you start that is going to be the opposite? And for me the opposite was to start with families and Thanksgiving and people who belong together. It is also the only sunny scene in the film. Everything is simple. Then you cut to the same tableau in darkness with the empty chair. I wanted it to look almost posed, like family pictures, romanticised as you like to remember family celebrations. People against that glass wall, against sunlight and all that foliage, like a group of warm plants in the sun; then the darkness, and you go into a world where people are enclosed. . .

Then later, when Bree Daniels sings that little hymn in her room . . . that was not planned by the way, it was Jane Fonda relaxing between takes. We had tried several things for that scene and I wasn't happy with any of them. They were reloading the camera, and she was sitting there smoking, off in her own world, and I suddenly heard her singing that hymn. I whirled round, and she looked at me and stopped. 'Oh, God,' she said, 'you want me to use that!' 'Yes,' I said, 'that's it, that's what we've been looking for.' It's one of my favourite things in the film because it's the moment when you really feel her vulnerability. The panic comes after, on the telephone; here it's a much more ordinary kind of vulnerability. Which interested me. Because when you have a girl who is psychologically disturbed, and you put her into this kind of melodramatic situation which is a perfect reason to be in a state of terror, then finding those moments when you see what that girl could be underneath, finding unhysterical, seemingly relaxed moments, is the hardest thing to do, and the most important for me. I'm not very interested in characters who come in at the top of their peak emotionally and stay there; but when I can sense that . . . sometimes almost

a sleepy part of them . . . then, ah! they exist *outside* the story.

Several people wanted me to cut that scene, saying I didn't need it. And from a storytelling point of view, indeed, the story would have played, nothing would have been lost, except the character. But there was something else. That hymn she sings is one most Americans sing at Thanksgiving time in grade school—middle class American kids—and it represents a whole kind of middle class upbringing. When Jane asked me why I wanted her to do it, I didn't really know. I just knew it was one of the great moments for me. But it not only linked with the opening shot, it was also right for Bree. Because her family is never discussed, where she came from. I did have stuff in the scenes with the psychiatrist where she revealed more about her background, but I didn't use it because I thought, oh boy, it's going to become a twopenny analysis. But there, in the midst of all this—you've just seen her pick up a trick, you've heard people talking about her bizarre way of life—there's this unexplained thing which is almost like a past life. It's like Bridie Murphy, something coming out of that girl which has nothing to do with prostitution, nothing to do with her present life, it comes out totally unconsciously when she's smoking pot.

In *The Sterile Cuckoo* I wanted to suggest, not too directly, that Pookie Adams was a girl who belongs nowhere. In the script originally there was a whole sequence on her campus, but now you never see her college. You see her in boarding-houses, in buses, in his college, always coming and going. The only world of hers you see is the cemetery, some place where she goes to fantasise by herself and where she takes Jerry after the disastrous visit to the bar. Even the scene with her father adds to that because they never say a word to each other. The most dangerous thing about the film is that it almost misleads the audience. Because the whole of the first part, with the exception of the prologue and a few interspersed moments, is done in the rhythms of comedy. So when you get halfway through with the scene where they go to bed together, the audience thinks well, this is obviously a fun film. A tender comedy, I guess Hollywood would call it! But then it changes: it becomes a sad little story of first love and first failure, of the people who survive and those who don't. There are still funny things but it slows down—deliberately—it slows down, it slows down, and then it just stops.

Now if the affair had ended melodramatically, if she'd really been pregnant and gone for an abortion, then a theatrical kind of thing could have taken over the comedy. But it wasn't that: the reality of that kind of affair for me was . . . something completely unformed, it died, and there was nothing left. Originally there was a scene which Alvin Sargent had written—and which, to his credit, I liked more than he did. It was a big, bravura scene to which everything was leading, and I shot it but never used it because it violated everything



Right: Faces of the murderer in 'Klute'. Cable (Charles Cioffi) in his office, watching Bree, and in the deserted garment factory. Below: Bree's apartment, with Kennedy poster and bare brickwork.

we were doing with that film.

The scene is the one where Pookie comes back to the boarding-house, and Jerry realises she must be there and goes in. In the film now she breaks down, he stays the night, and then just takes her back on the bus and that's it. In the script, and what we shot, there is a dissolve; it's the middle of the night. He wakes up to find her gone. He looks around, there's an empty bottle of sleeping-pills on the dresser. He panics and there's a hysterical scene which ends with her smiling and saying, 'April fool, Jerry!' She opens her hand and there are all the pills. And suddenly this gentle boy starts to hit her and breaks down sobbing, and she says, 'OK Jerry, *uncle!*' She knows she's destroying him and doesn't want to go on. It was a good scene, but it was too big for the picture; it brought it smashing up to a Kazan kind of climax (no disrespect intended) instead of just dying away. Once he doesn't love her any more, it's as though he has no right to express his anger. And the scene where he finally tells her he wants to leave her is one of my favourite moments in the film because she doesn't do anything, she just has her hand over her mouth and she looks at him, says nothing, and drives away.

We're back again, in a sense, with the scale thing, because I wanted *The Sterile Cuckoo* to have, again without stating it, a sense of looking back. The montage bits you don't like are part of that, an attempt at a kind of scene from memory. But I suppose they are Lelouchy; I feel the film gets unspecific and generally sentimental in those areas. Originally the script told the story in flashback with voice over, but I never shot that. It was based on a first novel by a young man just out of college and reminiscing about it, and I was trying to capture that sense of looking back. I would never have tried anything like the lyrical montage after the motel scene if I'd had two obviously film-romantic characters like Anouk Aimée and Trintignant. With this boy and girl in this romantic situation, I felt I could get away with it. But I forced it, perhaps. At my best I'm oblique, at my worst it slams in!

On the other hand, the ending, the bus, that scene with the car, all that works for me; it is clouded with memory. And that motel with the funny little church next to it . . . it's almost like land's end, a place made up by Pookie Adams. It's a world that boy would never find again. I don't know if you realise it but you never see a city in that movie . . . I didn't want to show any place that boy was going to go when he was an adult. In *Klute*, on the other hand, once you get into the city, you never see anything but the sense of being trapped in it.

A World Off Balance

I guess I'm attracted to a certain kind of limitation in the canvas, to films that take place in a limited world. With *Klute*, I cut off many of the compositions, reaching after very nervous compositions with Gordon Willis, the cameraman. On our first meeting I said to him, 'One of the biggest problems of this film is going to be that we are using Panavision, and I don't want any open space. I want a sense of verticals. I want a sense of being off balance, people

on the edge of the room, people constricted.' For Bree's apartment, George Jenkins originally designed three little rooms. I said let's yank all that and just have a tunnel: I wanted her at the end of a tunnel. I also wanted it unfinished. Because you're getting her at a transitional period: she's halfway in and halfway out, she's nowhere. It's not the apartment she would have had two years ago when she was fully committed to the callgirl life. Nor is it the other . . . I mean, if she designed the apartment she'd like to have, it probably wouldn't be like this and it probably wouldn't reflect her at all. This flat is not a cosy home, and one of the strange things about it for me is that, here's a girl, she's very frightened, and yet she's in a rooftop apartment. There's a sort of ambivalence about the danger. Part of her walks right into it, is attracted to it, and the other part protects herself with five locks on the door. Part of her is trying to make it a home, but the other part is saying oh, I'll never finish it.

Again there were throwaway ideas in that. The fact that there was a patch of exposed brickwork. Stylish young New Yorkers will tear out the walls and go to the natural brick, because it's handsome. Obviously she started. She clearly has taste, and everything she has in there, in its own funny way, has a kind of taste. But nothing quite goes together, nothing is finished. The idea of the shawl put up over the bed as a canopy was Jane's . . . I'm not interested in puppets, I encourage actors like mad because I want their ideas and I can use them. She also wanted to live in that set and she did, in the studio up in Harlem, for three nights I think. I had her order all the books to help her find the character, and she put up the John F. Kennedy picture because I introduced her to some callgirls and they all had one. She also ordered all the food in that ice-box, mostly health-foods. Again this is mostly throwaway, but these girls can be mainlining, and there they are saying, 'Yeah, but you got any wheat-germ? I don't eat those non-organic foods.' There are these rather comic attempts to take care of themselves and bring a certain order into their lives.

Anyway, I wanted that sense of walls, of being able to pull back and have that girl trapped at the end of a tunnel, the sense of being locked in. When I first showed the film at the studio, one of the executives, a rather bright man, said, 'Well, the trouble with the film, Alan, is that it's claustrophobic. You've got to get some more wide-angle shots, you've got to let the audience breathe a little.' And I said no. 'I know this is not a cheap picture, but you're not going to get the whole screen for your money.'

Even that garment place we found—it's a real location—has an unusually low ceiling and it's very, very long. Again that was terribly important, although I wanted a quite different effect there. In a curious way, that setting for me was very romantic. . . the old patches of cloth and the sewing-machines, all kind of silhouetted. It turns into terror at the end, but it starts out as a strange sort of romance in there. So much of the film up to that point is shot in a very cold way. Even, for example, the scene where she picks up the first trick. We shot that in a real hotel room. We could have built a set, but I wanted to get a sense of

being forced into not having angles, of being forced to do a sort of *cinéma-vérité* photography. Well, to go from that kind of cold reality to that dress place, even going up in that elevator to begin with—which becomes terrifying at the end—is rather a funny, eccentric thing, and it's almost like being pulled into a story-book world. In the original screenplay by Andy and David Lewis that scene was there, but the denouement took place in her apartment. The denouement was also quite different because there were no tape-recordings, no recording of the murder. But there was that scene where she went and undressed for that old man; and that's when I thought, 'I'm going to do this film.'

Jane asked me why I was so interested by that scene, and it's because it shows what essentially should be a totally corrupt sexual act, and yet it's in many ways the most romantic, innocent scene in the film. And that kind of contrast, that kind of paradox, interests me. I have a hunch that of all her clients, the old man might be the only one she deeply enjoyed. Ego-satisfaction, ego-reassurance. For a girl who undoubtedly had no fantasy life with her father—it's never said, but I'm sure hers is not a childhood with bedtime stories—this is about as close as you come to it. It's like a little girl playing at dressing-up, and there is a strange kind of story-book satisfaction.

There was an attempt to extend the picture stylistically in that scene. For her entrance, there was that move down from his point of view, then a panning shot with her inside; and then another move down and she comes into this rather lush close-up. Very early on in the picture I said to Gordon Willis, 'That entrance should be just like Von Sternberg photographing Dietrich.' The whole concept was misty and oozing rhythm, and then the almost liquid close-up. I thought the music was particularly successful there . . . something Michael Small has never really been given credit for. The music there has a deep sensuality and

yet a story-book quality. It created an atmosphere in which romanticism did not seem out of place. That scene, you know, was shot with rats running around the floor. We had the place for the Jewish holidays—it was the only time we could get it.

Disturbing the Scale

You mentioned the scene with the models at the beginning. Originally the script had a scene in which Bree talked, and you saw the TV commercial she was trying out for. Well, you just can't satirise TV commercials any more, so I did this scene instead. I said to Jane, 'I want to surround you with the most beautiful models I can get and put the prettiest next to you. I want the introduction to be as if you were just part of the chorus.' What I wanted was a sense of total anonymity. And they go right past her, all they say is 'Funny hands!' That was improvised—I didn't tell the actors what point I wanted to make. When I told Jane this was her entrance in the picture, she said, 'That's terrific. Because otherwise people would say, oh, Jane Fonda, what problems has she got, it's easy for her.'

In contrast to that total anonymity, that sense of being nothing to these people, Bree is a star, she's Greta Garbo, she's Marlene Dietrich, she's all of it to that old man. As one of the callgirls I talked to said to me, 'For half-an-hour I am the only thing that matters, I'm attractive to him, and oh, that sense of being *wanted*!' And there Bree is with that moment, she's a goddess. That scene with the models was also an attempt to play with scale, disturbing the scale in the picture. The first time you move from that quiet little house and garden in the prologue is to an image of what is *supposed* to be: those three enormous photographs, much bigger than the girls lined up like soldiers on those little white chairs. It was also an artificial composition, taken flat on, an attempt to show a certain kind of pretension in that world, where image and reality are

'Klute': Jane Fonda. '... I want to surround you with the most beautiful models I can get. I want the introduction to be as if you were part of the chorus.'



totally contrasted. I mean, those girls are tiny but the fantasy they're reaching for is enormous. Probably nobody ever gets it; but there are so many things that have been said and said and said, and unless in some way you give the audience a sense of them without their realising it . . .

It's rather the same with the murderer, Cable, in his office, or the scene with the casting director. In a sense all those offices and business places you see represent an attempt to be something more important than the person is, to make the person seem more important, and have little to do with any kind of reality in him. Finally, all these people are *playing* at being a television producer or whatever . . . and it's as though Bree were a kind of passive target for their egos. She's just something for them to play against, really; they're like old-fashioned star actors busy showing how marvellous they are. So it's something of that need to come back and say I AM, goddammit I am, I am important, that drives her on. It's her way of hanging on to reality, compulsive though it may be. Then when she goes to her client in the hotel room, in a curious way this faked up act of sex has at least a reality of emotion from the man, and in a way that's something to hold on to.

A lot of thrillers deal with the victim living in a nice safe world and suddenly the terrible menace enters, turning it into a nightmare. Well, that has nothing to do with *Klute*, because this girl is trapped between two enormous threats. She is endangered by herself, by her own life, and she is endangered by the melodramatic bit. The tape recordings were an attempt to synthesise these two elements, to suggest that Bree Daniels really almost destroys herself. The irony is that just as she is beginning to deal with her own problem, she is almost destroyed by a relic from her past.

The tape-recorder really came out of the fact that the end of the screenplay just had a man who came up to her apartment, started pouring out his life, and wound up by shooting himself. I was looking for a climax that had something more specific to the story . . . something more surprising, too. The idea of her hearing a friend's murder seemed more terrifying in its sadism. This man who records a murder he has committed is a man cut off from his own emotions and he plays back the tape, trying to feel something. It's the final act of masturbation. He's very often shot through glass or against windows, a man isolated, dead, in the black and white world of his office. For me, a more essential truth than all the wild, uncontrolled passions in a sadist was the deadness, the feeling of something missing, of even perverse orgasms coming second-hand. The irony of a man who is a scientist, obviously involved in aeronautics and the moon thing and who can deal with all that, but is himself cut off from the most simple human behaviour. The other thing that fascinated me about the tape-recordings was that from the very beginning her voice is weaving the web that is destroying her. You never hear the killer saying 'I am going to destroy that girl' or whatever; you just see that obsessed man going from murder to murder and listening to that seductive voice, that siren song calling him. So she becomes, up to a point, her own killer.

The Compulsions of Klute

Klute really deals with compulsive behaviour, and that's an area of John Klute we get into that is not totally developed, and it should be. Certainly the thing that you got* came out of Donald Sutherland in the part, and I'm interested that you got it. It was not deliberate, and yet there is a complication in the man that was not designed. What Donald gave it was a kind of complication underneath, a cut through the straightness of the character so that there was something else in that man. Now, I discussed a whole subplot about John Klute with the writer in which he represented the kind of small-town American that Spiro Agnew talks about: a man who embodies the puritanical protestant virtues, who believes that we control our destinies, is enormously honest, rigid in his code of moral behaviour, and condemning of people who do not live up to it.

This man, who obviously is repressed anyway, is forced in trying to find his missing friend into a whole world of compulsive behaviour. It's everything he despises and he feels attracted to it. In a way there was an area where he is almost crushed by it because he falls in love with her, and an examination of the why of what it releases. We discussed doing all of this in the film, but when we went into it the film began to lose a spine, something simple in the midst of all this convoluted story-telling that could pull the audience through it. So I rejected it. But somewhere or other it should be inherent; somewhere or other I felt there was something of the tortured puritan. And certainly Donald gave the sub-text of obsession at times, which I think makes the character more memorable than if it had been played by someone more simplistic.

The ending, too, is very tentative: the last line is 'You may see me tomorrow.' I think there is certainly no better than a 50-50 chance of Bree making it with a straight life . . . and I think a good deal less than that of her making it with Klute. The screenwriter would not have agreed with me: he had a happy ending. And Warner Brothers wanted the happy ending, but I didn't shoot it. What I love about that ending—which was improvised, the phone call . . . I didn't tell her how to react—is that it's done with humour but for a moment she's attracted, it's still there. Part of her is going to miss the old compulsions; they're kind of cosy no matter how destructive they are. But one could do another film and tell exactly the same story from the point of view of the man. Because he has got to a certain age in life, and when a friend whom he admires seems to have changed the whole pattern of his behaviour, he's almost looking to find out how that can happen, what there is in *me* that can make it happen again. There is that kind of search in the film, but there was no time to develop it.

I've been accused of being more interested in women's behaviour than men's, but after all this is only my second film. But I *do* relate to women. Let me tell you something

that John Nichols, the novelist of *The Sterile Cuckoo*, said to me when I first met him. The book was written when he was a year out of college and is obviously very autobiographical, and when we went on location to the college everybody said this girl or that girl was Pookie Adams. What he said was, 'Well, there were a lot of Pookie Adamses . . . but the reality, which I realised when I was halfway through the novel, is that I was Jerry Payne and I was Pookie Adams. Jerry was the stable, organised side of me that allowed me to function; and Pookie was the self-destructive, gifted part of me. Both surprised me and they're both me.' The same applies to me: I think I'm Klute, and I think I'm Bree Daniels at some points. I think I'm a man of great will, and also a man disturbed by compulsive behaviour, someone surprised that at my age—43—he's divorced. I did *Klute* at a very specific time in my personal life, and I was interested in that kind of ambivalence in a woman. Bree Daniels' problem, in a way, is the confusion of sexual roles; the paradox of the seemingly totally attractive woman who needs constant reassurance of her sexuality, and who also finds ways of using sexuality to deny sexuality by proving that she can make a man feel without feeling herself, that she is therefore stronger than the man.

The scene in the market, where Klute is buying fruit and Bree is just watching him, loving him, surprised that she can love anybody, is if you like a kind of sexual reversal. First of all, Klute is a man who would buy fruit carefully and would know how, whereas Bree, for all that she's supposed to be . . . well, who is very feminine—doesn't know how to act like a woman, as a lot of prostitutes don't. If I'd had a chance I'd have shown Bree shopping earlier in the film, rushing through it, taking no care. Here is this girl, and the man has to teach her how to be a woman. It's like he's the father of a naughty child—when she steals the fruit—and he has to teach her not only how to be a woman, but also that the simplest action in life deserves care, a kind of pride and joy and feeling in it. They were both marvellous in that scene . . . I originally had dialogue there but they wanted to try something without, and I said OK.

Areas of the film are improvised. For instance, the scenes with the psychiatrist. Psychiatrist scenes *per se* are such a cliché in films—they remind me of courtroom scenes, it's like nothing real ever happens there. The only justification is if you really feel a sense of self-discovery. If that doesn't happen—and it's an acting problem—then you can't do it. And it was very difficult. It was difficult because Jane was very true to character, and Bree Daniels is not a girl who is going to break down easily. Vivian Nathan, the actress playing the psychiatrist, was never introduced to Jane; she was installed at her desk, and when she was ready and the camera was ready, Jane came into the ante-room, and when I said 'Action!' she walked into the office for her appointment. And they talked. At the end of each take, I would talk to them separately so they never met off-set. And then it got complicated and it got kind of boring.

What happened was that we would have session after session, and Jane would talk about her problems, but she never said she

*[The killer] then dies as Klute makes the traditional cavalry charge to the rescue, and Bree is safe again . . . or has John Klute taken his place? SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn 1971.

was a callgirl. I suppose we got to about the seventh or eighth session. Then Vivian said, 'I keep trying and trying to get her to say she's a callgirl and she *won't* say it. I'm not going to force her because I'm not supposed to know.' I went to Jane and she said, 'I keep *trying* to tell her, but every time I start getting to it she changes the subject. She doesn't want to hear.' This went on all day and everyone was getting pretty bored. But Jane was *always* in character. And then I got to a point where I felt I had to break her out of it, so as to get something exposed. So I told Vivian, 'You've got to be less understanding now. I want you to really go at her. Slam her for all those half-truths.'

Jane came in and Vivian started slamming her. And Jane got very cool, cooler than before, more poised, more relaxed, just the opposite of what I wanted. I was really sort of heartbroken, because it was about four o'clock and I thought we weren't going to get it. So at the end of the take I went to Jane and said, 'Gee, Jane, she really went for you. How come you weren't more upset?' She said, 'Overt hostility is the easiest thing in the world for Bree Daniels to deal with. She deals with that every day of her life. It makes her relax because then she knows where she's at.' She was so right! I went to Vivian and told her to forget what I'd said, it was a bad direction. This time I told Jane

that on her way to the psychiatrist's office she saw a phone booth, that the compulsion to pick up a trick was as strong as ever, so she'd decided to quit analysis. That's all I told her.

She went into the office, sat down, got through all the how-are-you nonsense, then said, 'I can't come any more'—'Why?'—'Well, I can't afford it.' She told about the phone booth and wanting a trick, and they talked a bit, and Vivian said, 'Do you feel I've failed you?' There was a pause, then Jane said, 'No, I feel I've failed you.' All this time Bree had been saying how much she hated people. And Vivian did something—if she'd told me she was going to I'd have killed her—she suddenly dabbed her eyes. Jane looked at her and asked why she was crying. 'Well,' she said, 'all this time you've been telling me how you hate everybody, and you've just said a very nice thing about me . . . Now that you're going to leave me, what are you going to *do*?' Jane burst into tears and everything came pouring out, ninety per cent of what I have in the film, and she said, 'You know what it is? I'm beginning to *feel*. And I'm just so scared.' It came out, the voice was shaking, it was happening, and my back went like *that!* . . . There was no way of directing that, everything pouring out . . . and then we ran out of film. Nobody talked. We just re-

loaded and went on.

I don't understand anyone who says he just wants puppets: you *must* listen to an actor's instincts and give them consideration. But although areas of *Klute* were improvised within the form of a scene, and the script changed in terms of words and even scenes, it was the writer's idea to deal with that kind of girl and that kind of relationship in the form of a search. I felt that certain things in the script didn't work . . . for me; too much was overt, verbalised. Finally there was a point when I really felt I had to go out on my own. And then in the course of the filming, things like the tape-recorder and the improvisation with the psychiatrist . . . there were many things like that. But if Andy Lewis—he and his brother have screen credit but it was Andy I worked with—had not been fascinated enough by that kind of sexual ambiguity and that kind of compulsion and decided to try to do it within a thriller form, there would be no film, and I would not have directed *Klute*.

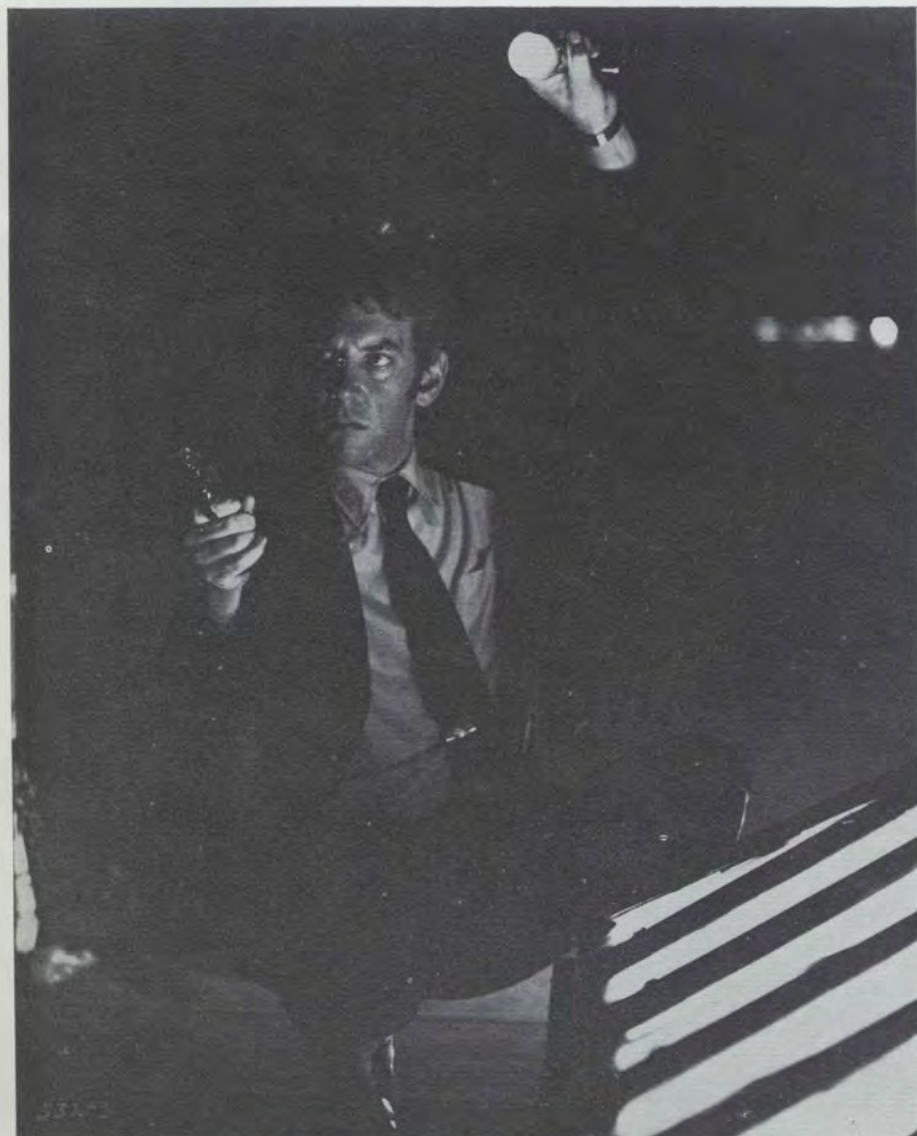
The Widower

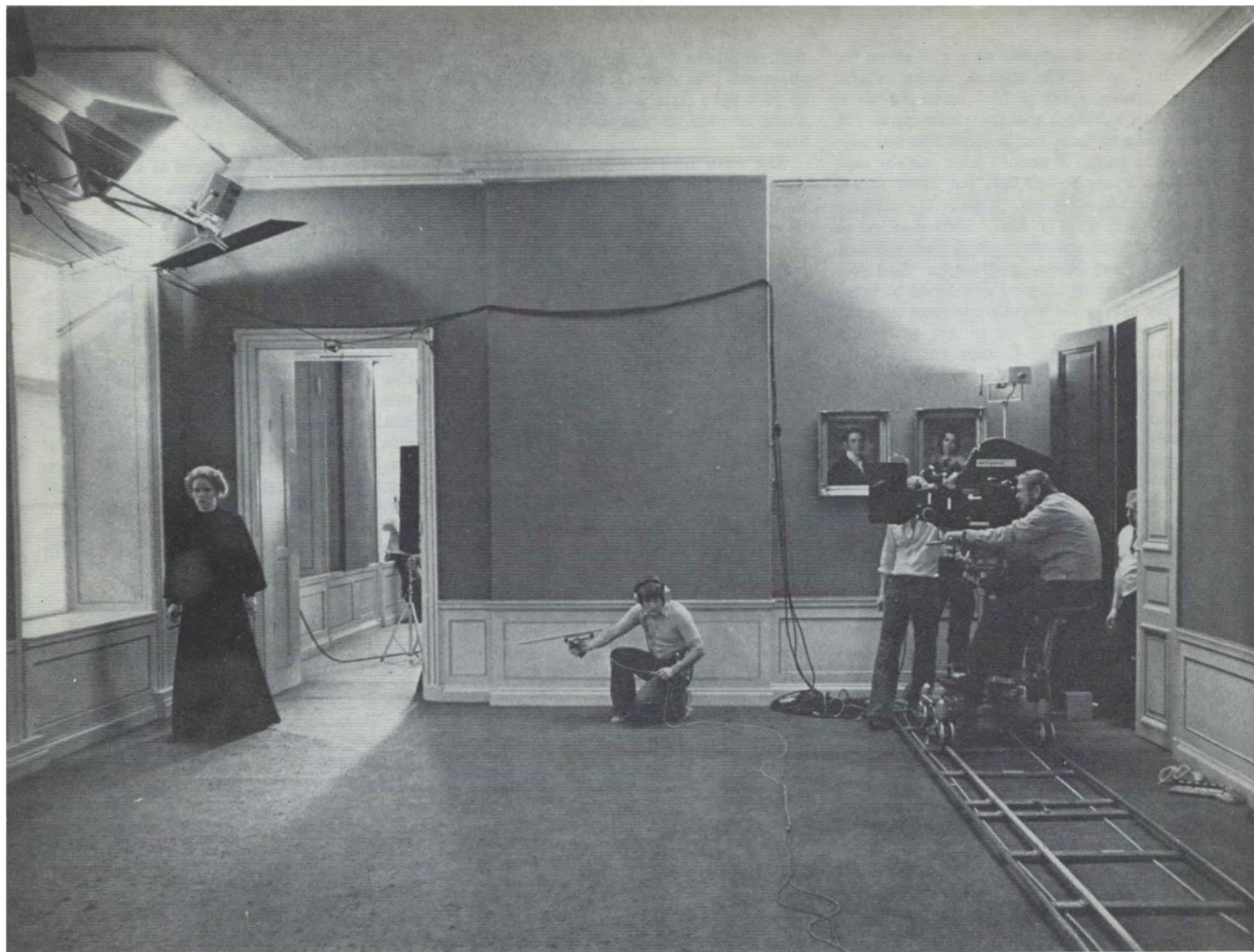
My new film is from a screenplay by Alvin Sargent, who did the screenplay for *The Sterile Cuckoo*. Both *Klute* and *The Sterile Cuckoo* dealt with one repressed person and one who was busy acting everything out. *The Widower* deals with two people who are totally repressed. And in every other way, except their withdrawal from passion and from exposure to hurt, they are entirely different. She's an English spinster, really more Victorian than anything, a woman of immense will, enormous discipline. He's a boy, an American boy, who seems to have been filleted, boned out. He seems to have no sense of himself, he refuses to compete. And it deals with their metamorphosis together. It's a love story of the absurd. They're outrageously mismatched; but somewhere, underneath all of the surface mismating, there is something only each one could have done for the other.

There is a shot early on in the film, a shot that must last, oh, I guess over a minute and a half . . . and it's just a pan down rows of books. It starts at the top and keeps going down these endless academic rows, and over it you hear a man talking into a tape-recorder, the boy's father, obviously preparing a speech for some august body, abstractions that would go with these books, and the camera just keeps going down, one case of books after the other, more books and more books and then at the very bottom, like at the bottom of a well, there is this boy, and the father's voice just goes on and on and then says, 'Well, Walter, how are you?'

And that's the boy. He's all secret and inside. And then he's sent to Spain because he spends all summer in movie houses, just sits there in strange passivity, and the father's not quite sure there isn't something wrong with him. Then his involvement with this enormously precise lady who protects herself in a different way. They're absurd together, ludicrous . . . but essentially it's an outrageous little love story. In a curious way, of course, all three of my films have in common that they have ludicrous lovers. There's not a Garbo or a Gilbert in the bunch.

Donald Sutherland as Klute





James Paul Gay

RED MEMBRANES, RED BANNERS



It has been nearly a decade since Bo Widerberg first nailed the charge of 'social irrelevance' on Ingmar Bergman's door, and the subsequent period has been one of increasing polarisation within Swedish film life. At its simplest, this division could be defined as the conflict between Bergman's psychological expressionism and the attempt by nearly all the young Swedish film-makers to forge an artistically viable Socialist Realism. The tensions, however, lie much deeper than the mere formulation of conflicting ideologies, and extend instead to all levels of film production. On one point only has there been unanimous agreement: the prognosis for the future of Swedish film is deeply pessimistic.

To a great degree this pessimism is rooted in the current economic crisis. Television was introduced only in 1955 (colour broadcasting began in 1970), but its impact was greater than all predictions: today more than 85 per cent of all Swedish homes have a television set, and the decline in cinema attendance is still continuing unabated. Production costs, of course, have skyrocketed, and the proclivity toward experiment and innovation has been replaced by caution and an agonised mulling over box-office receipts. The decline in revenue has not only decreased the venture capital at Svensk Filmindustri and Sandrews, but even more important, it has limited the potential of the Swedish Film Institute. At the moment, the Film Institute's sole source of income is a 10 per cent tariff on cinema tickets. This gives it an annual budget of £1.2 million (1970) of which around £80,000 is allocated toward new film production. In spite of the drastic rise in ticket prices, the financial position of the Institute is more precarious today than at any time since its creation in 1963. Shooting in bad weather has long been a necessity in Sweden, and the cold winds from the balance sheets make spring seem very far off indeed.

The success not only of Bo Widerberg, but also of a sizeable group of young directors who have followed in his wake—Stellan Olsson (*It's Up to You*), Roy Andersson (*A Swedish Love Story*), Lars Forsberg (*The Yankee*) and Lasse Forsberg (*The Assault*)—has created an image of a growing politicisation of film. These film-makers are, of course, of widely differing temperaments and talents; they are listed together only because each of them has in some way contributed to this image. The way in which film has become 'politicised', and what that term has come to mean, should be carefully examined and an assessment should be made to determine how much of a liberating force the politicised film has been.

The preoccupation with politicising art has been both international and cross-cultural, affecting theatre, music and the plastic arts as much as film. The events of the past decade, both technological and political, which have brought this consciousness to such prominence have been well documented and need not be repeated here. The results are clear: not only have many more films (and plays, and paintings and songs) taken an overtly political theme, but the restrictions which had previously limited the treatment have come under heavy questioning. The most visible of these is of course censorship, which has significantly relaxed its grip (although it is far from dead: Ken Russell's *The Devils* has been banned in Sweden*). But one has only

to remember that *Potemkin* could not be shown in this country until 1952 to feel grateful for the progress that has been made. Of more importance than the purely negative restrictions of censorship, however, are the implicit, often subconscious limitations that result from the way a film is distributed, produced and written. It is precisely these considerations which were to be such a liberating force.

These explorations led to the realisation that film production could be transformed in three ways: political themes could be made the explicit content of a movie, films could be shown outside normal cinemas, and the audience could be transformed from passive spectators to engaged participants. Each of these three developments could be revolutionary in the true sense: replacing one consciousness with another, transforming the self-evident into the archaic. The results would be that film viewing could be made a part of everyone's working-day life, an appendage of the factory instead of its antithesis. Politics would be not only war, money, imperialism, ideology and colonialism, but also education, sex, marriage, food, psychology and even sleep. The *auteur* would be de-mythologised, and film would be transformed from a closed, authoritarian statement to a mutual exploration of a universal sensibility. Audiences would actively respond (often by making films of their own) until the distinction between artist and spectator would be defined in new ways, and finally obliterated entirely.

What should be noted is not the extent to which this transformation has failed, but the degree of its success, which is remarkable. This film aesthetic has made brilliant and impressive strides—in Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and a few other semi-developed countries. Interestingly, it has not taken root either in the advanced industrial countries, or (with the exception of Cuba) in the revolutionary vanguard of the Third World. The few examples of Chinese films available in the West show a completely different line of development. This aesthetic, developed more or less simultaneously in France, America, Italy and Sweden, has found its expression in none of these places. The most intelligent attempts somehow come off strangely stillborn: Godard's *One Plus One* is an exploration of what films might look like if it really were possible to make a film like *One Plus One*. The brilliant successes of Gerardo Vallejo, Fernando Solanas, Glauber Rocha and the rest only emphasise more forcefully the vacuum in which European and American directors are working. The more strongly they feel about democratised cinema, the less possible it seems to attain it.

This dilemma has exacted a particularly heavy toll on the Swedish cinema because a much larger group of film-makers are

working toward these goals here than in most other countries; and because the division between director and the 'front office' is much less pronounced in Stockholm than at Universal or Mosfilm. The most influential Swedish producers, such as Bengt Forslund, Göran Lindgren, Peter Hald and Bo Jonsson, are, one feels, as dedicated to this ideal as any of the directors they work with. It is precisely because the frustrations of film-making cannot be attributed to simple pressure from the top that they become so insupportable.

Film-making in Sweden has become politicised in ways not foreseen ten years ago, and for reasons which are less ideological than financial. The enormous centralisation of resources has forced a series of 'political' judgments to be made on film production: facilities and capital are finite and must be distributed in the most equitable and efficient way possible. That the men who preside over this distribution are remarkably enlightened does not negate the essentially anti-democratic nature of the process itself—a fact with which most producers here will readily agree. This process implies that film is a commodity perennially in short supply and that the function of society is to see that its distribution is as equitable as possible. The result is an economic politics more of necessity than liberation, and I think it provides a key to many of the more puzzling reactions of Sweden's younger artists. The terms in which Bergman is so often denounced, for example, spring less from a confrontation with his films *per se*, than from an analysis of their relation to the audience. They are seen as luxuries for a non-productive class—esoteric artifacts which the intelligentsia uses to maintain its elite position. Conversely, the box-office success of a Widerberg film is not only welcomed for the obvious reasons but seen as a positive ideological triumph: movies have broken out of the art houses and have reached the people.

Bergman is attacked not only as a symbol of an élite but also because he represents the Strindbergian tradition of stylisation, expressionism and psychological probing. That Bergman invariably draws his characters from among the bourgeoisie is an indication to his critics not only of ideological irrelevance but also of the very marked class differences that still characterise Sweden after forty years of Social Democratic rule.

It is in this way that the polarisation and dissatisfaction have taken hold. The criteria by which one judges the films have moved outside the work itself; value depends upon factors extraneous to the closed universe of a screening-room. A Bergman film is rarely attacked here for a failure to complete its stated aims; the aims are simply dismissed as irrelevant from the beginning.

That Bergman himself is immune to this criticism has only made it more strident. That his art has grown in complexity and beauty precisely to the degree that he has abstracted himself from a specific social environment has only made it seem more dangerous to his opponents. Few people outside Sweden would seriously argue that

Left: Bergman's 'Whisperings and Cries', with Liv Ullmann (above) and Ingrid Thulin (near left, with Bergman and Liv Ullmann).

*This action was appealed by Warner Bros, who eventually succeeded in having the decision of the State Censorship Board overruled.

Summer With Monica is a better film than *Persona*, and yet it is the Bergman of the former film who is most admired in this country. One cannot help being reminded of the strictures of atavism raised against Bach in the late 18th and early 19th centuries; in both cases what is criticised is not the work itself but a preconceived structure (be it harmonic superiority or neutrality of language) that the work is accused of lacking.

At the same time, Bergman must be recognised as a solitary phenomenon: future developments in film-making will of necessity

a friend and student of Bergman. Through his success with the *I Am Curious* films, he hoped to spark a thorough-going debate about all aspects of Swedish life, a debate in which no other medium could be as effective. Instead, he saw himself gaining unwanted notoriety as a 'sexually advanced' director; the intently serious and scathing social critique was simply smothered in the voluminous curves of Lena Nyman's body. The most immediate effect of the film is that it opened the floodgates to a torrent of cheap porno-comedies and facetious 'sex-

houses. The film audience, not large to begin with, has so polarised itself that when a film arrives which is outside the current spectrum of critical debate, it is simply ignored. Thus it is virtually impossible to see any films here by Bertolucci, Ray, Bellocchio, or Bresson. Similarly, by confining themselves to specific social problems and acting as vehicles for debate in Swedish politics, it becomes very difficult for many new Swedish films to find a foreign outlet.

With this as a background, the furore that arose over the making of Ingmar Bergman's latest film can be seen to fit into a very consistent and often repeated Swedish cultural pattern. Last September, Bergman began shooting a colour film called *Whisperings and Cries* on location in the Mälars bay. The financial arrangement is unusual in that this is the first of Bergman's films to be made as a co-production between his own company, Cinematograph, and the Film Institute. The Institute's support of Sweden's most famous artist has been sharply attacked by two quite disparate groups: the younger directors and critics, who feel that it should be the Institute's firm policy to support new directors and controversial projects, and the heads of the major production companies, who would have liked the relatively secure financial return that a Bergman film gives them. The intensity of feeling that this arouses on both sides runs very high and is no doubt exacerbated by the struggle for resources that takes up so much of everyone's energies here. The argument has been conducted almost entirely on financial lines, with the Institute claiming that the Bergman project will be profitable, thus making more money available for maiden ventures, and the critics charging that Bergman is no certain box-office draw, and that in any case it will take several years before the Institute receives a return on its investment.

The film itself is seen by Bergman as a development of concepts which he introduced in *The Silence* and *Persona*: the isolation of specifics, the closure of an environment, the re-examination of a series of leitmotifs. Three sisters (Harriet Andersson, Ingrid Thulin, and Liv Ullmann) and a servant (Kari Sylwan) reunite in their old manor house when one of them is discovered to be dying from cancer of the uterus. The shooting was done in an old mansion near the town of Mariefred. As often happens, the locale influenced the entire structure of the film, and Bergman said he felt as if he had written the setting himself. One vital alteration was made to the house: the interior walls were painted in various shades of red. In the introduction to the shooting script, Bergman commented in answer to the inevitable question: 'Don't ask me *why it's to be that way*, because I don't know. I've pondered the reason myself and found each explanation more comical than the other. The bluntest but also the most tenable is probably that the whole thing is something internal and that ever since childhood I have imagined the soul to be a damp membrane in varying shades of red.'

Even greater than usual demands are being placed on cameraman Sven Nykvist, who must try to re-create (in Bergman's words): '... dawns that don't look like dusks, soft hearthglow, the mysterious indirect



'*Whisperings and Cries*': Bergman with Ingrid Thulin

turn further and further away from his path. The tragedy is that so far no new paths have been cleared, and the Swedish forests are filled with Eclair-carrying film-makers tramping through the underbrush, trying to come together to build a highway. So far, even the most talented and intelligent among them have been unable to reconcile the conflicts inherent in any art that aspires not only to usefulness, but to utility as well.

One can take Vilgot Sjöman's work as an illustration. He was active in the 1950s as a novelist and critic; he later became

education' films. Sjöman was probably too bemused to be bitter, but in his next film, *You're Lying!*, he returned to a more conventional documentary approach to attack the prison system. His two most recent films, *Blushing Charlie* and *Troll*, have attempted to unite a lightly comic style with an inherently serious political undertone. At times they are very funny indeed, but the tension between the two parallel aims is never synthesised into a coherent whole.

Perhaps the saddest toll is a kind of cultural isolation that has enveloped the movie

light the day it snows, the mild radiance of the kerosene lamp. The torment of a clear, sunny, autumn day. A solitary light in the darkness of the night and all the fidgeting shadows when someone wrapped in a billowing nightgown hurries through the large rooms.'

The shooting was finished last October, but Bergman, as is his custom, left the film in a first rough cut while he spent the winter working at the Royal Dramatic Theatre. He plans to resume editing in the spring and *Whisperings and Cries* is expected to open in the autumn of 1972.

Those film-makers whose work is least easily categorised along political lines have been no more immune to the pressures than others; in fact it is often here that the limits of these new demands express themselves. The films of Jan Troell are an excellent example. Troell's second feature, *Ole Dole Doff* (*Who Saw Him Die*) is one of the most remarkable films ever made in Sweden. It deals with a self-destructive schoolteacher (Per Oscarsson) who passively permits his students to crush him, and it assaults the viewer with a visual surface so powerful and at the same time so 'documentary' that one becomes totally absorbed into Troell's world. This kind of overpowering sensual immediacy conveyed by nearly every image creates an entirely different dimension, one that transcends the content of each scene. The viewer's relationship with the film is altered. Very few films achieve this kind of visual symbiosis; one example is Bell-occhio's *Fists in the Pocket*. Interestingly, *Ole Dole Doff*, which was shot by Troell himself with a hand-held 16mm camera, has a visual density that could probably not have been achieved at all with 35mm. The school where the film was made is the same school in which Troell once taught; since the crew was so small and unobtrusive, many students hardly noticed the filming at all. For all of its available-light realism, there is something distinctly surreal about this film; a constant and very powerful ambiguity exists between the documentary surface of the images and their expressionistic undertone.

Troell's recent *The Emigrants* has been filmed from Vilhelm Moberg's tetralogy about Swedish emigration to North America in the nineteenth century. The cycle will be completed with a second film, *Unto a Good Land*, to be shown this spring. *The Emigrants*, in spite of its many virtues (it is a solid, well-made film), lacks the density and power of *Ole Dole Doff*. The reasons for this are not simple. Troell is meticulous in his attention to detail, the actors are uniformly excellent: Max von Sydow, Liv Ullmann, Eddie Axberg and Allan Edwall have so perfected their ensemble playing that the re-enactment of southern villagers carries great conviction. Troell is faithful to Moberg's description of the hardships under which these farmers lived. Their poverty is not sentimentalised, the corruption of the clergy and the callousness of the propertied classes who ran the government are forcefully documented. Ironically, it is this very accuracy that distances the viewer from the movie. The effect is like listening to an oral rendition of a well-known myth. The very willingness of audiences to accept an accurate picture of exploitation and brutality in their



Jan Troell's 'The Emigrants': Liv Ullmann, Max von Sydow

own country (an acceptance that was also seen with the success of Widerberg's *The Adalen Riots*) is a sign that the representation of reality can become an inoculation against just the consciousness that such a representation was designed to bring out.

The Emigrants has been such a success that it reputedly saved Svensk Filmindustri—the world's oldest film company still in active production—from the threat of collapse. If the film could simply be judged as art for its own sake, or even more simply as entertainment, it would come off very well indeed. But Troell and Moberg, who is one of Sweden's most socially active writers, certainly intended something more. The fact that the public embraced their work so warmly only makes one feel all the more that no audience is seriously prepared to

accept information that could constitute any kind of threat to existing exploitative systems, nor tolerate any structural arrangement that has not already been thoroughly explored, pre-digested and defused.

Other paths taken toward the goal of making politically viable films on a mass basis have been much less successful, simply because there are few young film-makers with Troell's gifts. *The Emigrants* represents the most ambitious attempt to revitalise socialist realism as a potent force in a society which has refitted capitalist structures to socialist forms and language. *Life's Just Great* (Jan Halldoff), *Elvira Madigan* (Widerberg), and especially *A Swedish Love Story* (Roy Andersson) have taken a different route—weaving a 'hidden' political message into the structure of an ordinary, and often

Johan Bergenstråhle's '48 Cook Street'



enough very trite, entertainment film. Bo Widerberg, who has worked both ways, has described this latter method as the 'baba-aurhum' school of film-making: one cannot expect the audience to eat the cake unless it is generously soaked with rum. Comically enough, it is the Swedish Maoists who are most vocal in their praise of this method of film-making, but an analysis of its potential need not go too far. Aside from the fact that it has been done many times before (Metro's vaults are crammed with 'message' pictures) there remains the inescapable conclusion that banality is still banality—with or without rum.

If the re-politicised film has so far shown its limited effectiveness on the screen, it is without doubt the major impetus toward creativity in the most serious younger filmmakers. It is a golden fleece that propels artists of the most disparate temperaments, and the unifying theme of the most widely varying sensibilities. This search for the political film is most interesting when seen in the work of a single director. Johan Bergenstråhle has made three films, *Made in Sweden*, *A Baltic Tragedy*, and *48 Cook Street*. He is, in addition, one of the few younger directors to continue in the tradition of Alf Sjöberg and Ingmar Bergman, working with equal intensity in film and theatre: his production of Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* has been the hit of the Stockholm season. All of Bergenstråhle's films look completely different from each other, and his film work (unlike Bergman's) is not at all related to his style of theatre directing. This enormous disparity between his films, rather than condemning him as a 'styleless' director, a non-*auteur*, is one of the most interesting things about him. It indicates a fluidity that is not so much a reflection of Bergenstråhle's personality as a symptom of this attempt to somehow build (or find) a radical sensibility. The means used in this attempt are sometimes the very antithesis of radicalism.

Made in Sweden is not so much a film as a crash course in film-making. Every scene is shot in a different style, and the soundtrack is built up to a density that is almost indecipherable. The influence of Godard (even in the title) is obvious, but in spite of the fact that the film isn't really sure of itself, it is an interesting attempt. As always, an ambitious failure is of greater value than an easy success. *A Baltic Tragedy* is a chronicle of a very ambiguous chapter in Sweden's recent history: the deportation to the Soviet Union of Lithuanian soldiers in the German army who had fled to Sweden at the end of World War II. Bergenstråhle has explored the moral complexities of this situation with a good deal of inventiveness, maintaining at the same time both his neutrality and involvement.

48 Cook Street, which was one of the few films shot here this season, is a drama of immigrant life in Stockholm. All the actors are non-professionals, and much of the dialogue will be in Greek. The post-war influx of immigrants into Sweden has brought enormous social changes, and in spite of recent restrictions caused by the current unemployment crisis, it is estimated that within a few years 10 per cent of the population will be foreign. Bergenstråhle does not regard *48 Cook Street* as a 'problem' film

or a social exposé; he simply wants to portray the everyday life of a small group of Greek immigrants, to present them sympathetically to an audience used to regarding them as alien and somewhat unmannered. It will be interesting to see whether the Swedish public will recognise the environment as its own, the people as neighbours.

48 Cook Street is what most distributors would probably call a 'small' film of limited earning potential. That the Swedish cinema has traditionally had room for such films is one of its greatest credits; that the future for such films is far from bright is a very real danger. In a country like the U.S., with its multiplicity of production sources, no one needs to be as defensive about the 'aim' or social value of a movie: there is no inherent conflict between the work of an Ed Emshwiller and a Robert Wise. Sweden lacks America's luxuriant pluralism; there are no major foundations, no university grants, no giant corporations. The demands exacted by the Film Institute, Svensk Filmindustri or Sandrews are, if anything, more lenient than those of the minor companies. In short, everyone drinks from the same tap and when the fountain dries up everyone goes thirsty. The number of new productions is at a record low, the gap between hit and flop is widening, and even after a film is completed the problem of getting it into distribution can be nightmarish.

Ironically, the film crisis has had one overwhelmingly positive effect, an effect whose impact is only beginning to be felt. The squeeze that has been in many ways so frustrating has sparked a tremendous development of technical resources. Film crews have continued to shrink; equipment is becoming more and more flexible. New ways are being found to get increased quality at less cost. In this respect Sweden has always been at an advantage: not only are there no medieval union regulations and featherbedding, not only has there never been a tendency toward mastodontic (60+) crews, but in addition, technical facilities for all phases of film-making have been undergoing a continuing refinement. In America a film editor is still bound to his Moviola, a paradigm of clumsiness and poor design, while the convenient and logical Steenbeck has become the European standard. The deluge of quickly shot television shows, which provides the bulk of a Hollywood lab's business, has led to a lamentable decline in print quality. Not only are the Swedish labs much more modern (print timing and colour correction are carried out by computer), but the degree of quality control is absolutely outstanding.

These technical developments have accelerated, in spite (and perhaps at least partly because) of the film crisis. A recent and important contribution has been made by Swedish cinematographer Rune Ericson. He replaced the standard aperture of an Eclair NPR with a larger and wider aperture that covers the entire area of a single-perforated 16mm frame. Not only does this increase the image size by 40 per cent, but it also elongates the ratio to the standard theatrical 1:1.66. With this system, a film is shot and edited in 16mm and then enlarged on a wet-gate optical printer to 35mm. Ericson calls his innovation 'Super 16' and it has been popularly dubbed 'Runescape'.

This innovation has removed two of the

biggest stumbling blocks to a wider use of 16mm in theatrical films: excessive graininess and altered composition due to the difference between the standard 16 and 35mm ratios. The image quality still isn't as good as that obtainable with a studio camera, but it is a vast improvement over standard 16mm systems, and it has not yet reached the end of its development. *Blushing Charlie, Troll* and *48 Cook Street*, as well as a number of Danish pictures, were all shot in Runescape. The cost for raw stock and developing is fully 60 per cent lower than with standard 35mm, and the flexibility it allows is very impressive: Sjöman shot *Troll* with a crew of four. These technical developments are not at all tangential to the creative aspects of film-making; they are one of the major factors in deciding whether a director is a free agent or just a production foreman.

As with most technical advances, the use of 16mm in theatrical films has at first meant a decline in quality. Just as sound first immobilised the camera, and colour brought the art of lighting down to the quality of postcard reproductions, so the use of 16mm has often resulted in a compendium of sloppiness and unprofessionalism that has made it seem a regression instead of an improvement. I believe this is just the first result of its use. Sound and colour added enormous subtlety to films precisely when they first began to be used contrary to their 'natural' functions. 16mm films will begin to come into their own when they move away from the documentary, available-light, hand-held world in which they were born. Their potential lies not in eliminating the subtlety of sculptured lighting or the varieties of camera movement, but in achieving these ends with a simplicity and directness not known to the studio bound.

Perhaps it is just this tendency to move away from 'natural' functions that will become a positive aesthetic force as well. The development of politicised cinema thus far has achieved only its antithesis: polarisation, rigidity and regression. It has been a long time since Pudovkin taught us that sound is most effective when played against the image rather than with it. Perhaps the politisation of film will be achieved using themes far removed from politics.

In any case, it is clear that the situation is one of maddening paradox: the freer and more overtly engaged a film becomes, the more restricted it seems in its dramatic fullness and thematic complexity. Political film as it is defined today could never be an agent of change; it is too tightly bound in the very apparatus it seeks to overthrow. Today there is no political word or image that has not become completely devoid of its meaning. It is precisely because social reality is being drained of its content that the subjective, non-communicative, personal world of a Bergman has such potency. The past century has seen a complete dichotomy between social and artistic progress. The refusal (or inability) of the politicised cinema to recognise the new structures into which we are being moulded only reinforces that dichotomy. Revolutionary energy is being dissipated, while the fumes rising from the decay of an old order paint the sky with patterns of indelible beauty and grace.

ANTI- CINEMA

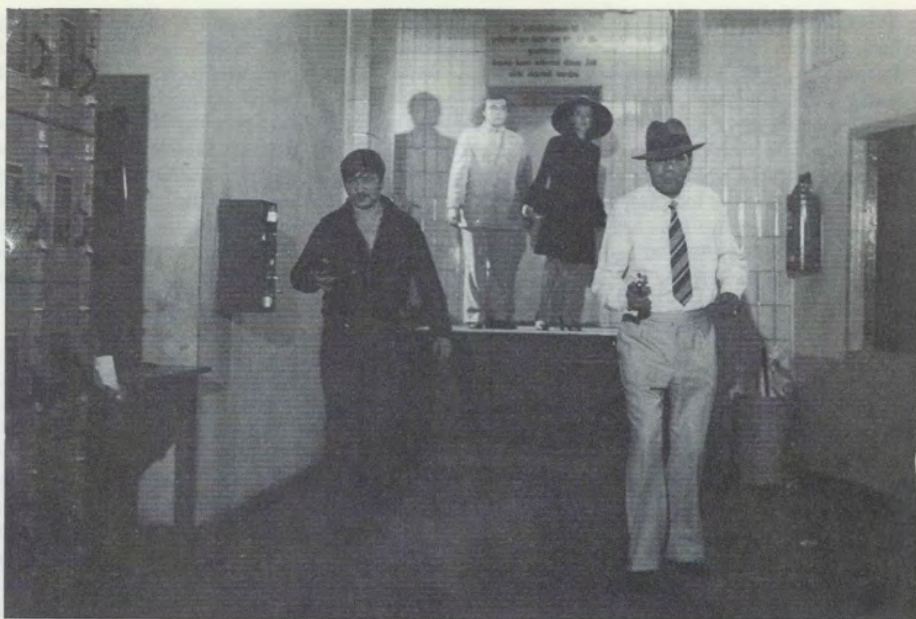
Rainer Werner Fassbinder

David
Wilson

Rainer Werner Fassbinder will be twenty-six next month. So far, since 1968, he has made eleven films, directed at least as many plays (several of them his own), and frequently appeared as an actor in the theatre and on television. This whirlwind career suggests a dynamo. In fact, Fassbinder is a short, podgy man with an old-fashioned clipped moustache, in appearance the archetypal *gemütlich* Bavarian. As in his films, though, appearances are deceptive.

Fassbinder's account of how he came to make films is characteristically laconic. Nobody was working in the theatre in 1968, he says, but a lot of people were making films; so why not join them, using the ideas tried and tested in his own Munich Action Theatre? Those ideas had been revolutionary, even by the standards of a modern German theatre founded on experiment. Fassbinder saw his theatre group as a blitz on theatre as the cosy and at that time mostly exclusive province of the cultural bourgeoisie. So he monkeyed about with the classics, slapped critical faces with idiosyncratic versions of Büchner and Ionesco, and put on plays of his own which exposed raw nerves in the complacent burghers and tame radicals of a boom economy. The group soon changed its name to Anti-Theatre. Décor was minimal, often just a table and some chairs against a monotone backcloth; and the productions were characterised by a similarly monotone acting style.

This austere aesthetic is also to be seen in the films of Jean-Marie Straub, who has clearly been a formative influence on Fassbinder. Straub incorporated his own Anti-Theatre production of Ferdinand Bruckner's *Krankheit der Jugend* into his short film *The Bridegroom, the Comedienne and the Pimp*, and the pivot of that film—



Top: Fassbinder and Karl Scheid in 'The American Soldier'; centre: Hanna Schygulla in 'Gods of the Plague'; below: 'Katzelmacher'.

a five-minute tracking shot along a Munich street—finds a conscious echo in Fassbinder's first film *Love is Colder than Death*. This gangster movie pastiche also reveals the influence of the Godard of *Bande à Part*, but the uneven structure, as well as the overall tone of precocious bravura, make both these influences look unassimilated; the best sequences in the film are also the least original. Fassbinder had still to find his own style. But this first film, for all its formal inconsistency, pointed up in embryonic form some of the themes which recur in his work. In particular, the corrosive lure of money, and the insane fantasies it engenders (Fassbinder's crooks are always dreaming of flying down to Rio or thereabouts); and the casual violence, both physical and emotional, of a group whose mutual dependence saps their capacity for individual action.

Group identity, its insularity and its paranoid hostility to outsiders, is the basis of Fassbinder's second film *Katzelmacher*. A Munich apartment block houses several interchangeable couples, all of them bored, listless and totally self-engrossed. The threat to their complacency comes from a 'Katzelmacher' (Bavarian dialect for *Gastarbeiter*, or foreign worker), a Greek immigrant who rents a room in the block. The newcomer, played by Fassbinder himself with an impishly deadpan innocence, is both an object of curiosity to the group and the catalyst for their previously suppressed internal dissension, of which in the end of course he is the victim. Irrationality runs rife, characterised by sudden outbursts of petty violence (one of the women keeps getting her face slapped) as quickly forgotten as they are perpetrated, and fanciful expressions of prejudice, like the revelation that the Greek must be a Communist because Greece is full of them.

With *Katzelmacher*, Fassbinder articulated a style which fits his material like a glove; indeed, form and content are here virtually indivisible, since the 'narrative', as in most of his films, is essentially trivial if divorced from its formal context. He has constructed the film like a rondo, or a game of musical chairs (literally—the actors are frequently caught changing their positions round a table) in which the players finish where they started. This circular effect is underlined by two recurring formal variations. The actors are periodically seen, in a static medium shot which in itself is an expression of the director's cynical view of them, sitting on a wall exchanging banalities about each other and the Greek; and there is a repeated interlude in which the camera accompanies alternating pairs of actors as they walk arm-in-arm across a courtyard gossiping about the rest of the group, their self-righteous pomposity punctured by a Schubert melody on the soundtrack.

As usual in Fassbinder, except for isolated and unpredictable bursts of temperament, the dialogue is delivered in a soporific monotone. Speech is timed to a rhythm which has the effect of disengaging the audience from the characters and obliging them to reconsider the status of what at first seems naturalistic. And just as the audience is kept at one remove from the characters, the actors (Fassbinder's stock company) wear mask-like expressions throughout. It is as though the characters were sleepwalking through

their encounters, which is of course exactly what Fassbinder wants to suggest. This vocal camouflage, along with Fassbinder's static long takes and deliberately unaesthetic group settings, deflects identification while at the same time forcing a re-evaluation of the audience's stance in relation to the actors and their roles. The facile temptation to see in *Katzelmacher* a microcosm of German bourgeois society is thus offset by the realisation that the lessons of the film can be universally applied.

This conscious lack of definition is Fassbinder's version of what Bazin called 'existential physiognomy', an artifice perfected in the films of Dreyer, Bresson and Straub. The artifice lies in the compression, the abstraction of any 'significant' extraneous detail: the settings of *Katzelmacher* are bare white walls and the deadening perspective of the side of a building shot flat on. The consequent absence of psychological nuance is an effect Fassbinder plays on in most of his films. Like *Katzelmacher*, *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* is more of a comment on individual behaviour than on any identifiable social group, even though the group here—the army of the petit bourgeois—is instantly recognisable. Herr R. is a draughtsman; he has a wife, a child, a comfortable flat, amenable colleagues and friendly neighbours; by the social standards to which he himself subscribes he should be content with his lot. Why he isn't, why indeed he finally goes berserk, impulsively murders wife, child and neighbour and hangs himself in a lavatory, Fassbinder charts with a devastatingly accurate catalogue of torment, the more telling precisely because each detail, trivial events as well as the final cataclysm, is given equal weight. The interminable minutiae of the daily round have seldom seemed so enervating, and the measured, unpunctuated pace establishes a tension that is almost tangible. Seemingly oblivious of the monotonous babble of the neighbour or the trite embarrassments of an office celebration at which he has to stumble through a speech, Herr R. wears throughout a glazed expression behind which boils a volcano of resentment. The explosion, totally unexpected though implicit in the film's every scene, comes as he is watching television while his wife chatters away to the neighbour; without saying a word, he picks up an alabaster lamp and beats them over the head.

During the climactic scene Fassbinder's camera is fixed on the television screen, apparently mesmerised like Herr R. by the flickering continuity of mind-numbing trivia. This device of focusing off-centre is a Fassbinder trademark. He is constantly disconcerting his audience, fastening their attention by paradoxically distracting them from a scene's focal centre. *Gods of the Plague*, another of his pastiche gangster movies, uses this trick throughout. The opening is a classic piece of Fassbinder double-take. A gangster just out of jail enters the Lola Montès nightclub (like Godard, Fassbinder peppers his work with film jokes, though they are usually incidental and so unobtrusive). Backstage a roulette game is in progress, the table spotlight out of the surrounding shadows. It might be a scene from an archetypal Forties gangster

movie, and this is exactly the conditioned reflex Fassbinder wants from his audience. Having set it up, he confounds it at every turn, parodying the Hollywood Forties conventions in a story of betrayal and incompetence which is very much of the Sixties. The hero is disconcertingly a black, in a Munich underworld characterised by a penchant for white coats; his former girlfriend now sleeps with a corrupt detective; and after everyone in the film has talked incessantly of money and the price of betrayal, the final shoot-out is staged amid the coffee tins and canned uniformity of a supermarket—the nonconformist trapped among the symbols of consumer conformity.

Throughout the film Fassbinder indulges his own variation of the Brechtian *V-Effekt*, manipulating expectations in his audience which he then confuses with a startling but studied shock tactic. We are constantly being challenged to rethink our jaded responses to the cinema's icons. In sharp contrast to the earlier films, *Gods of the Plague* is almost decorative in style: the images are worked on, there is a highly theatrical use of chiaroscuro in the interiors, there's even a free-wheeling helicopter shot as gangster and friends drive through the countryside. The relative elegance seems almost diletantish until one realises that the very artificiality of the style, in conjunction with the mannered atonality of the dialogue, is part of Fassbinder's ploy to lull the audience into expecting something very different from what he in fact delivers. Like Godard and Straub, Fassbinder knows how to use theatrical mannerism to point up more sharply his own awareness (and so the audience's) of film language, its limitations as well as its potential. And the film past. Fassbinder's love affair with the gangster movie is both critical and self-critical, as another parody, *The American Soldier*, makes abundantly clear.

The opening scene is again an affectionate evocation of the idiom of the Hollywood gangster film. Three men sit playing poker at a table in a basement room; a lamp casts the only light in the room full on their faces; somewhere in the shadows a clock ticks. A telephone rings and the trio's leader, readily identifiable by his authoritative calm (as well as the fact that he keeps winning the game), picks it up, listens in silence and announces 'He's here'. Expectations are again left dangling in the air, as the mystery man turns out to be a German-American just back from the Vietnam war, returning as a hired killer to the now unrecognisable Munich of his childhood. He duly despatches his assigned victims, efficiently, anonymously and without a flicker of emotion, before being himself killed at the hands of the trio, who turn out to be cops doubling as gangsters. The killer, laconic, white-suited, distractedly pulling on a whisky bottle, is both a traditional figure and a contradiction of that tradition. He acts in a moral limbo, in a city seemingly bereft of people. The individuality of the Hollywood gangster is replaced by a mechanical anonymity, and his milieu, once governed by codes of behaviour even in its darker quarters, is a moral wasteland of hotel rooms and bars where only the messages on the neon lights are to be taken at

Pictures of Innocence

John Lindsay Brown

On the chaste, discreet poster for *Carnal Knowledge*, the name of Mike Nichols preceded—and was not differentiated from—those of Jack Nicholson, Candice Bergen, Arthur Garfunkel and Ann-Margret. A small detail, perhaps, but one that could scarcely be more generally symptomatic or individually appropriate. With the phrase 'the director as superstar' gaining increased currency as the 1970s formulation of the *auteur* theory, no one seems more qualified for inclusion in the category than Mike Nichols. The status which the industry has now publicly accorded him is normally granted only to those directors (such as Ford or Hitchcock) who are associated in the public mind with certain kinds of cinematic experience; Nichols' association seems to be primarily with enormous box-office returns. His track record of four films in six years reads one moderate success (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), one solid success (*Catch-22*), and two smash hits on a scale that gives substance to producers' dreams (*The Graduate*, with its global gross exceeding fifty million dollars, and *Carnal Knowledge*, with its promise of doing the same). No wonder that in the eyes of the industry, Nichols' charisma is at the moment unrivalled. Perhaps that very charisma is a reason why serious criticism in this country seems to have by-passed the crucial question of Nichols' identity as a director, in favour of treating his films as isolated units. However, the nature of Nichols' achievement in *Carnal Knowledge*—and given his career up to now, it seemed a rather surprising one—provokes the question of what characterises his work as a whole.

The announcement in 1965 that Nichols was to make his debut as a film director on Ernest Lehman's production of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* seemed at the time rather surprising; but knowing Nichols' previous experience in the theatre and show business, one can make an

educated guess as to why he was chosen. That experience included a brief spell at Lee Strasberg's Actors' Workshop in New York, a period of some hardship as a professional actor, followed by a return to Chicago (where he had graduated from university). In the company of people like

Neil Simon, Alan Arkin and Elaine May, Nichols moved into cabaret as a writer and performer; with Elaine May, he began to develop a routine of barbed dialogues covering all the skirmishes of the sex war whose success culminated in a Broadway production. Nichols was persuaded to make the transition to theatre direction with Neil Simon's gentle marital comedy *Barefoot in the Park*. He went on to direct seven more Broadway productions, which led to an offer to direct a film version of Charles Webb's novel *The Graduate*. This project was postponed in order to allow Nichols to do *Virginia Woolf*; and his career in films thus got under way in the much more prestigious company of Ernest Lehman, Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor and Edward Albee.

These names, plus the enormous reputation of the play itself, give a hint of possible motives behind Lehman's decision as producer to offer Nichols the task of direction. Quite apart from the general reverence which Hollywood accords material that has already proved its potential, Lehman is one of that small group of producers—Thalberg and John Houseman amongst them—who are attracted to projects of some intellectual status. It can be assumed, I think, that Lehman's basic aim was to preserve with integrity the whole conception and infrastructure of Albee's play; his problem, therefore, was to ensure that the film was both fluently cinematic and faithful to the atmosphere of unbearable marital claustrophobia. The problem was solved by what was in essence a classic Hollywood formula: two heavyweight stars with a taste for culture to lure potential audiences from that large section of the population to whom the play's name would mean nothing, a supremely competent cameraman and editor to provide the cinematic expertise, and a tyro director with three overlapping qualities—a skill in handling comedy with serious overtones, a familiarity with dramatic conflicts based on sexual relationships, and an excellent reputation for working with actors. Lehman himself as producer and screenwriter would then be able to guide the entire team towards the creation of the desired product—a 'quality film' that would be not only good show business but also art.

It is difficult to avoid a tone of irony in such speculations, partly because the basic strategy of the production seems so curiously old-fashioned (more typical of Hollywood in the 1940s than in the mid-Sixties), but also because the film which emerged from it lacked the single quality that seemingly had been excluded from the calculations—an individual voice. For all its careful craftsmanship, the film never approaches the electric tensions of the stage production. (As Nichols remarked, the physical presence of an audience before whom George and Martha perform is vital to the play's development.) Surrounding *Virginia Woolf*'s essential vacuum as a film are some considerable virtues—excellent performances



'Carnal Knowledge': Jack Nicholson

from Elizabeth Taylor and George Segal, incisive clarity of exposition and inventive control of dramatic climaxes. But as a whole the film is so academically correct that one suspects its principal value is to the teacher dealing with Albee or with the play itself: the sheer transparency that vitiates it in the cinema justifies it in the classroom.

But the failure of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* to be as much Nichols' as it is Albee's should not imply that it can be safely dismissed in favour of the more obviously personal films that followed; indeed, in two respects at least, it seems crucial to a view of Nichols' work as a whole. On a general level, *Virginia Woolf* occupies the same thematic territory as *The Graduate* and *Carnal Knowledge*; more specifically, it forms the source of a number of motifs that reappear later. All three films deal primarily with the sexual strata of relationships in middle-class America, particularly that segment of the middle-class which is self-made, reasonably well-off, oriented towards education in terms of status, vaguely liberal (even the Robinsons' daughter attends Berkeley) and morally 'sophisticated'. The view of these relationships which all three films present is a pessimistic one, with exploitation and self-destructiveness the recurring characteristics. Moreover, Nichols habitually charts the same line of dramatic tension through his material, a line which can be summed up as the varieties of defeat suffered by innocence in its confrontations with experience.

In both *Virginia Woolf* and *The Graduate*, these confrontations and defeats take place within a relationship between a young man and an older married woman; and in both cases the motives are complex. For Martha and Mrs. Robinson, Nick and Benjamin represent the same temptation: to break the rules for the sake of breaking them, to 'do dirt' on social environments that constrict them without actually endangering their own social positions, to reassure themselves of their sexual vitality and, eventually, to humiliate those they have seduced to prove to themselves that experience has given them the power to do so.

Nichols' conception of Martha as 'the brilliant, over-educated, ball-cutting woman who also has womanly feelings and alternates between them'* is in some ways a simpler one than that of Mrs. Robinson. One brief scene in *The Graduate*, where Benjamin vainly tries to have a serious conversation with Mrs. Robinson between sessions in bed, gives us the Martha aspect of her experience that Mrs. Robinson has rejected in order to have a different kind of life from Martha's. In fact, interpolating from both films, one could guess that Mrs. Robinson would be the only type of woman to intimidate Martha, since she has all Martha's qualities—intelligence, humour, perception of other people's natures—plus the strength that comes from a determination to belong to a different world from a New England college. It is clear that Mrs. Robinson feels both the contempt for and dependence on her milieu that Martha expresses so graphically in *Virginia Woolf*—witness the casual, bored expertise with which she picks up Benjamin

at his parents' party, her skill in continuing the affair under the noses of both families, and her savage reversal when Benjamin inadvertently threatens the one value centre of her existence. (It's also noticeable that in certain sequences of *The Graduate*, such as the hotel scenes, Anne Bancroft acquires a physical resemblance to Elizabeth Taylor as Martha.)

Compared with the density of characterisation given to the women, the young men are slighter figures. As an innocent who believes himself experienced enough to handle Martha on his own terms (and learns shatteringly that he is not), Nick seems in some respects to be the prototype of Jonathan in *Carnal Knowledge*; in other respects (such as his attitude towards his wife) he looks forward to the character of Sandy in the same film. He compares most interestingly, however, with Benjamin, in that he pays the penalty of humiliation because his conceit will not let him grasp the nature of Martha's attitude towards him. Benjamin, on the other hand, is able when the moment comes to reject Mrs. Robinson's view of him as an object, to reject passivity. Yet characteristically it is to his parents, who are unaware of the situation, that he announces his intention to marry Elaine; and even more characteristically his decision to act (the trip to Berkeley; the final encounter with Mrs. Robinson in her house) produces only frantic and almost ineffectual action. The enchanted fairytale conclusion to *The Graduate* is moving precisely because of the ambiguity within Benjamin. As the bus moves off with both him and Elaine smiling defiantly at the audience, no real transition from innocence to experience has yet been made.

Revealing more, however, than a substantial thematic continuity, a comparison of *Virginia Woolf* with *The Graduate* brings into sharp focus one of the central critical problems posed by Nichols' work. This is the problem of style. It is tempting to read the tricky construction of *The Graduate*, with its razzle-dazzle 'now-you-see-it, now-you-don't' ellipses of visuals and soundtrack, as the work of a director flexing stylistic muscles after the necessary sobriety of a film based faithfully on a highly claustrophobic play. But after the very different styles of *Catch-22* and *Carnal Knowledge*, this seems an insufficient explanation—the sheer range of Nichols' eclecticism is not contained by it. Instead, it would seem that stylistically Nichols is very much at the mercy of his collaborators.

After working with Lehman to some extent on the script of *Virginia Woolf*, Nichols chose Buck Henry to rewrite *The Graduate* when previous drafts by William Hanley and Calder Willingham proved unsuitable. The time sequence of *The Graduate* is in fact conventional. What makes the film seem unconventional in structure are the devices Nichols and Henry use to compress time, particularly in the sequence immediately following Mrs. Robinson's seduction of Benjamin. According to Nichols, these transitions were worked out before shooting; and as the film stands, there are two ways in which they can be criticised. The first is that, in the first half of the film, they appear obtrusively clever, channelling our attention towards the technique itself;

the second is that, in the sequences after Benjamin follows Elaine to Berkeley, the invention runs out, and the construction becomes choppy and confusing both with regard to time-span and spatial relationships. The numerous shots of Benjamin driving back and forth along the freeway begin to look so like mere padding that one might well wonder at the time whether Nichols was capable of handling straightforward, economical narrative.

Superficially, the masterly conception and execution of the screenplay for *Catch-22* might seem to rebuke such a question; in fact, it poses the problem of collaboration even more acutely. Of Nichols' four films *The Graduate* and *Catch-22* are the most stylistically elaborate, both in terms of narrative construction and editing devices. And if there is evidence to support the view that Buck Henry exercised a considerable influence on the structure of *The Graduate*, it is reasonable to assume that this influence also operated in the case of Nichols' next film. Certainly there seems a close similarity between the transitional devices used in the first half of *The Graduate* and those of *Catch-22*—indeed, the entire conception of *Catch-22* as a film seems to have been built on such transitions.

But to this area of collaboration must be added another. The work of David Watkin, director of photography on *Catch-22*, has always tended towards the virtuoso level—on Tony Richardson's *Mademoiselle* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, for instance, or on Richard Lester's *Help!*. One suspects, therefore, that Watkin also contributed considerably towards the film's style, especially in shots like the opening one which records the sunrise, pivots through 180 degrees, tracks across the runway as the planes take off, and up into close-ups of Yossarian telling Colonel Cathcart (although we cannot hear the dialogue at this point) that he has had enough, cranes down with Yossarian's departure to the attempted killing, and finally fades out into burning white as Yossarian collapses.

Such considerations as these perhaps explain the paradoxical effect of *Catch-22*—that while it is Nichols' most successful work in its own terms (until *Carnal Knowledge*) it is also his most impersonal. Thematically it is consistent with his other films, being less an anti-war statement than another examination of innocence confronting experience. With much more aggression than Nichols' earlier protagonists, Yossarian attempts to define and make viable his innocence by defiant non-involvement with the combat operations of his unit. But once again experience—in the shape of the military system—displays its own resilience by accommodating Yossarian's half-instinctive, half-deliberate acts of anarchy within its own lunacy.

Nevertheless, the main impact made by the film as a whole is its sheer ingenuity in translating the breathless, roller-coaster rhythms of Joseph Heller's novel into film terms; and the thematic core of a man drawing a line and refusing to venture beyond it becomes submerged in the intricate structure of flashbacks. Moreover, the two 'significant' passages (the dialogue between the old man and Nately in the brothel, which all but mentions Vietnam specifically, and the facile up-beat ending, helicopter shot

* In an interview published in Joseph Gelmis' collection, appropriately titled *The Film Director as Superstar* (Secker and Warburg).



Hoffman, Katharine Ross in 'The Graduate'; Garfunkel, Candice Bergen in 'Carnal Knowledge'



Anne Bancroft, Hoffman in 'The Graduate'; Elizabeth Taylor, George Segal in 'Virginia Woolf'

and all, as Yossarian heads for Sweden) suggest that Nichols saw the film partly as a platform for political statements. All in all, it might be reasonably accurate to sum up *Catch-22* as two-fifths Nichols, two-fifths Buck Henry and one-fifth David Watkin. This does not mean that it fails to be an engaging and resourceful piece of entertainment (there are worse ways to spend \$10,000,000, use a roster of stars and avoid showing rushes to the studio); but it does make it a difficult film to come to terms with in the context of Nichols' career.

'There is finally no heterosexual solution,' Leslie Fiedler observed in *Love and Death* in

the *American Novel*, 'which the American psyche finds completely satisfactory, no real or imagined consummation between man and woman found worthy of standing in our fiction for the healing of the breach between consciousness and unconsciousness, reason and impulse, society and nature.' In *Carnal Knowledge* Nichols has achieved one of the most despairing variations on this theme to be found in American cinema, and it is an achievement that one would scarcely have predicted on the basis of his earlier films. In the place of that dogged refusal to be intimidated by the sheer expressive potential of the medium, there is a simplicity of style which is far more affecting; in the place of a conscious reaching out towards significance, there is a precision of detail in expression and gesture from which general meaning arises naturally.

Carnal Knowledge records the friendship of 'deux hommes moyen Américains'—Jonathan (Jack Nicholson) and Sandy (Arthur Garfunkel)—as it progresses from their college days in the late 1940s to their middle-aged affluence in the late 1960s. Although we are given a certain amount of implicit information about the backgrounds and careers of the two men, their individual development over the years is rendered exclusively in terms of sexual attitudes; and (despite being visually more discreet than one might expect) Jules Feiffer's screenplay takes full advantage of the cinema's new freedom to give the dialogue a stinging, exhilarating impact. It would be a mistake, however, to categorise *Carnal Knowledge* as one of those dialogue-laden films which scarcely exists above the level of the script. So far from that, *Carnal Knowledge* seems to me the first of Nichols' films in which other people's contributions are subsumed and totally integrated into a personal work.

That it is a personal work can be demonstrated, first of all, on the thematic level. Each of the five main characters—Jonathan and Sandy; Susan whom they meet at college, who is secretly seduced by Jonathan but eventually marries Sandy; Bobbie who moves in with Jonathan, marries him and eventually divorces him; and Cindy, Sandy's second wife whom Jonathan makes an abortive attempt to seduce—can be traced back to earlier protagonists. The most obvious example is Sandy, who is very much a more realistic and convincing version of Benjamin—just as Susan corresponds to Elaine but lacks the latter's aura of romantic beauty. Their married life, which Sandy movingly describes in the middle section of the film, sounds rather like Nichols' own speculations about the style of married life open to Benjamin and Elaine after their escape from the church. Jonathan, on the other hand, functions as an extreme version—in some respects—of Nick in *Virginia Woolf*. The interplay of character and motive in the scene where he attempts to engineer a change of partners and is rejected by Cindy is very similar to the one between Martha and Nick. As this indicates, moreover, Cindy is a younger, deliciously acid version of Mrs. Robinson; and if she is the only character to make her exit from *Carnal Knowledge* on her own terms, it is apparent to the spectator that she is paying the cost of this—her hardness is already evident. This leaves Bobbie, who has superficially no real counterpart in any of the

earlier films; yet the use which Jonathan makes of her recalls the scene in *The Graduate* when Benjamin humiliates Elaine by taking her to a bar where a grotesque stripper is performing. The contrast in sexuality between the two women in this scene perhaps suggests the origins of Bobbie as a character.

All five characters in *Carnal Knowledge* embody innocence and experience, but the proportion alters from minute to minute in the intricate shifts of relationship. The keynote of these relationships is exploitation, and the complex patterns of exploitation are presented through a visual style that counterpoints them by its very simplicity. At this level, too, one feels that Nichols is totally in command. Working with a new writer and cameraman (Giuseppe Rotunno), he achieves an extremely lucid narrative construction, whose formal design seems very different both from his own previous work and from Feiffer's—such as *Little Murders*.

Carnal Knowledge is organised in three episodes, with the two men providing the link. The first (set in a college campus rather reminiscent of the one glimpsed briefly in *Virginia Woolf*) acts as a lengthy prologue; the second, which is edited in a smoothly elliptical way, covers a much longer period of time; and the third provides a brief but devastating epilogue.

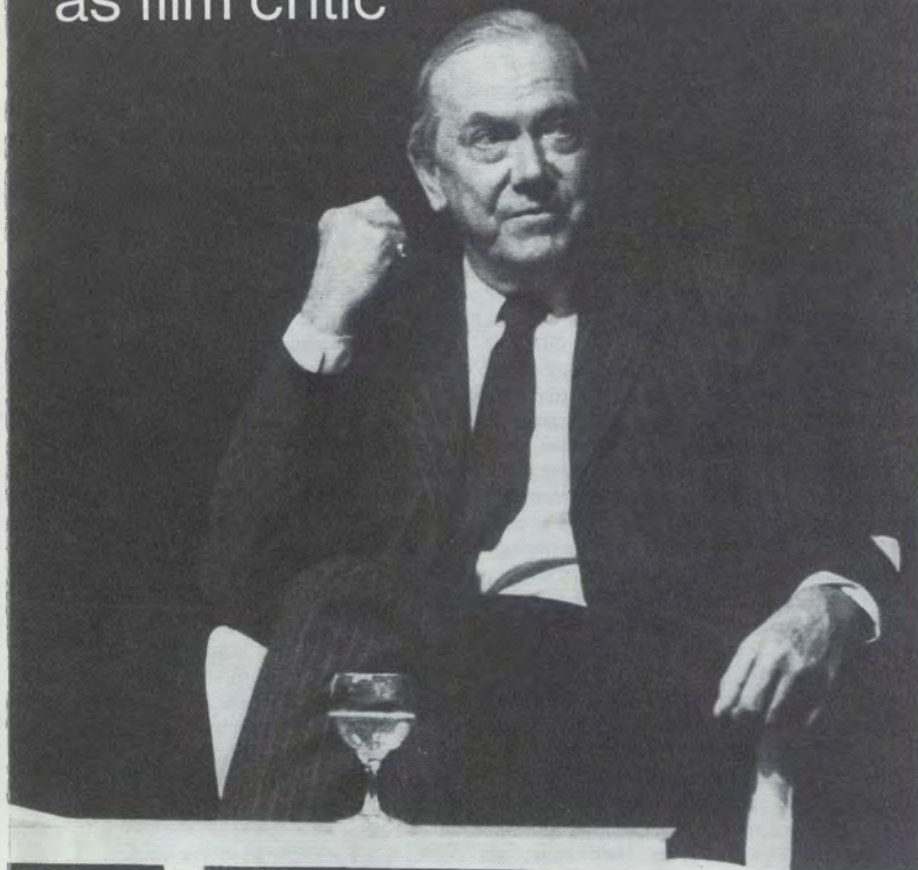
The division between episodes is marked by close-ups of Jonathan, burning out into white (the device used in *Catch-22* to mark the transition to Yossarian's recurrent memory). But this formalism is not used for its own sake; it corresponds to the film's interior style, which is summed up, perhaps, in a superb shot from the first episode. On the left-hand side of the image, Sandy makes self-conscious conversation with Susan, whilst at the back of the room—in the centre of the image—Jonathan watches, a cynical, waiting figure. The depth of focus allows us to perceive the three characters and their inter-relationships in the round, and in its dispassionate gaze is worthy of Preminger; just as the film as a whole suggests the influence of a known admirer of Preminger, Eric Rohmer.

In fact, the most memorable visual images in Nichols' work have been those when the screen is empty but for a face confronting the camera—Benjamin, for example, or Yossarian turning apprehensively towards us in the cockpit. To these *Carnal Knowledge* adds the searching close-ups of Jonathan and Sandy as they haltingly explain their emotions (ostensibly to each other, in fact to us); and the two contrasting images of carnality—Bobbie as she leans back listening to Jonathan, and the anonymous girl skater who ends the film on a cold white vision.

It is, of course, impossible to offer at this early stage of Nichols' career any conclusive summing-up, any one sentence definition of what is distinctive and valuable in his work. And Nichols himself would probably recoil from any attempt to do so. After telling an interviewer (*The Film Director as Superstar*) that it would be a mistake to regard films as objects of permanent importance, he said, 'The biggest kind of shmuck wants to be remembered. The next biggest wants to remember you. And the least shmuck of all simply gathers information to take into his grave...'

Graham Greene

as film critic



Judy Adamson

In 1935 Graham Greene became film critic for the *Spectator*. Young and inexperienced as he was in reviewing films, he talked his way into the job at a cocktail party.* In 1925 as an undergraduate he had written a few articles on film for the *Oxford Outlook*, but otherwise his talents had previously been spent in writing, and reviewing mostly novels and short stories. Nevertheless, he quickly became regarded, to use John Grierson's words, as 'the best critic we had.'† He remained the *Spectator's* critic until 1940, and in 1937 was also film critic for *Night and Day*. During the same period he wrote incidental articles on film for *Fortnightly Review*, *The Times*, *World Film News* and *SIGHT AND SOUND*.

What distinguished his criticism was its bite and wit. 'I sometimes wonder,' he wrote when reviewing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'whether film reviewers are taken quite seriously enough. Criticism, of course, may not be quite in our line, but the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has shown beyond doubt that no one can shake a better tambourine or turn a better table... Apart from criticism there is little we film critics cannot do. We are superb mediums, or is it an intuitive sympathy with the poet which enables a Mr. Luscombe Whyte... to tell us that Shakespeare "had he lived now" would have approved of Herr Reinhardt's film version of his play? ... Alas, I

failed to get in touch with Shakespeare... but I feel quite sure that Anne Hathaway, "had she lived now", would have thought this a very nice film (I am certain of the Dark Lady of the Sonnets).'

Clearly, he had no sympathy for his colleagues who wrote for the middle class. Neither had he any for the escapist film that catered to its tastes. 'Millions go to the cinema, but do they get what they want or do they get what the middle class public wants—the cinema of escape? The thou-

* Author's interview with Graham Greene (October 1970).

† Author's interview with John Grierson.

sands who come down to Wembley... don't want to escape.' The cinema should belong to them, and 'any artist who rejects the ivory tower, who wants his art to be part of the vulgar natural life,' should welcome the chance to work for it.

At the time, Greene felt that novelists no longer made any effort to create a really popular art. He, on the other hand, had always been interested in common art. His early novels had been a form of popular melodrama. But they reached only thousands. The cinema reached millions, and he was challenged by the problem of providing those millions with what they wanted. 'Shakespeare had belonged to the people, catching for the first time in verse the accent of common speech, giving them the violent, universal tragedies they understood. He and Ben Jonson had served the people and the people had moulded them.' (*British Dramatists*, London, 1942)

Greene wanted the cinema to give the common people what the great Elizabethan dramatists had. But the twentieth century artist 'could no longer be heartened by the direct applause, or criticised by the direct disapproval, of the common people. He would hear only the crackle of chocolate paper, the whispers of women with shopping baskets, the secret movements of courting couples.' The artist should take heed of these crackles and whispers and realise that they existed because he had not given his audience what it wanted. It 'didn't want to be soothed: it asked to be excited.' 'It wanted something as simple and exciting as a cup-tie, just as the Elizabethan public wanted something as brutal and exciting as what went on in the bear-pit.' And the bear-pit aroused a communal response, which was, 'not the sum of private excitements, but was mass feeling, mass excitement, the Wembley roar.'

The cinema, like the sports spectacle, is a physical medium. A film makes a direct impact on the audience. The response of an isolated reader or a theatregoer, separated from the actors by the footlights, is not the same as that of the film viewer. Alone, hidden in a crowd, a spectator watches from a darkened room. He identifies with what he sees, experiencing simultaneously those emotions he watches played out before him. If the film-maker knew what he was about, Greene felt he could use this intimacy to draw his audience into such mass excitement as that of Wembley, or into such mass feeling as that of the Elizabethan theatre. Once he had done this, he could begin subtly to 'put over what he would of horror, suffering, truth.'

Examples of films that aroused this kind of communal feeling were difficult to find. Greene cited *Duck Soup*, the early Chaplins, a few shorts by Laurel and Hardy... perhaps *Fury*, *Le Million* and *Men and Jobs*. These did convey the sense that the pictures had been made by their spectators and not merely shown to them, that they had sprung, as much as their sports, from *their level*.

Like many others, Greene was interested in the cinema's vast audience. Lenin considered film the most important of the arts; John Grierson's initial interest in it was as a powerful propaganda medium. But even though Greene was fascinated by the idea of reaching millions, he had no more interest in the film as propaganda than he had in it

as an escape mechanism for the bourgeoisie. His concern was aesthetic. He believed that when the artist had involved his audience in the popular drama, then he could subtly develop the poetic drama. The film was a medium which did not require a high level of literacy on the part of its audience, yet which allowed this audience glimpses of the poetic withheld from the common people since the Puritans closed the theatres. It could create images visually that only a handful of writers had been able to do verbally; and could arouse the kind of communal feeling that would make those images an everyday part of people's lives.

It was toward the definition of this popular 'poetic cinema' that Greene devoted much of his time as film critic. Ford Madox Ford had divided fiction into novels and novellas (those stories he didn't consider as art). Greene followed suit, dividing films into cinema and movies. The latter represented the commercial escapist film. The former held greater possibilities, and it was here that he began his analysis of the poetic cinema. Like so many of his ideas about the novel, this consideration was influenced by Chekhov, rooted as it was in the realisation that the only subject matter for art was 'Life as it is and life as it ought to be.' To be valid art had to hold this antithesis. On film this meant that 'every poetic image should be chosen for its contrasting value.'

Using *We From Kronstadt* as an example, he talked of 'the gulls sweeping and coursing above the cliffs where the Red prisoners are lined up for their death by drowning, the camera moving from the heavy rocks around their necks to the movement of the light white wings.' Juxtaposing images of peace and freedom with images of war and death, the camera showed life as it ought to be and life as it was, gaining immense poetic power from the contrast. Greene was defining something more aesthetic than cinematic here, for he was talking about a picture of reality as incomplete unless it contained its obverse—what ought to be. In filmic terms, that meant it must include both what was before the camera and what the artist felt were human possibilities.

Although he did not discuss the technical elements of these contrasting images, he made it quite clear that they were the combination of more than photography and cutting. 'Photography by itself cannot make poetic cinema . . . it can only make arty cinema. *Man of Aran* was a glaring example of this; how affected and wearisome were those figures against the skyline, how meaningless the magnificent photography of storm after storm.' Meaning came only

'*Man of Aran*'



with 'the personal lyric utterance, the indications of life as it should be.'

Poetic cinema need not be complex. It could be 'built up on a few very simple ideas . . . it didn't require a great mind to conceive them, but it did require an imaginative mind to feel them with sufficient passion . . . Simple, sensuous and passionate, that definition would not serve the cinema badly.' Alexandrov's *Jazz Comedy* had this



'*The Jazz Comedy*'

quality. Greene spoke of its 'almost ecstatic happiness . . . its sense of good living that owed nothing to champagne or women's clothes.' He 'rejoiced in its simple irrelevance . . . its wildness, its grotesqueness.' Charlie Chaplin had 'a few simple ideas . . . courage, loyalty, labour against the nihilistic background of purposeless suffering . . . He didn't try to explain, but presented with vivid fantasy what seemed to him a crazy comic world without a plan.'

Of the films Greene reviewed, few satisfied these rigorous criteria. Some, like *Dodsworth*, were partially satisfactory. They had the great virtues of natural acting and natural speech, presenting life as it is; in this case as it appears to an American millionaire. But they did not show life as it ought to be. *Dodsworth's* version of that was an unrealistic Italian villa on the bay of Naples and a refined widow. Hardly a poetic portrayal.

There were many other such examples. Cecil B. deMille handled an army of extras on the big sets as could no other director, creating a sense of reality that was horrifyingly true to life. But in all but *The Plainsman*, these moments of brilliant detail lasted only minutes in very long films. Perry Mason was Greene's favoured film detective because he was cadaverous and not well dressed, wearing a seedy hat and straggly moustache, frequenting the same haunts as his criminals. In *Poppy*, W. C. Fields' complete dishonesty afforded a portrayal as vivid as that of any Dickensian character. But all of these films lacked that 'critical purpose' that made the cinema poetic. The sense of life as it should be was not there; and that sense, which 'must always be a critical one,' was as important to the poetic cinema, and to all art, as was the sense of how life was. Perhaps it was even more important. It was certainly the more difficult to capture, for it meant that a director had to analyse his material, making it transcend its actuality.

Again and again Greene returned to Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon*. 'Faulty in continuity as it was,' it contained more of what he was looking for, 'criticism implicit in the images, life as it should be.' Criticism implicit in the images—here was the essence of Greene's cinematic canon. In *We From*

Kronstadt, the scene he had described juxtaposed two contrasting shots (one of life as it ought to be, the other of life as it was) making one poetically whole image. The freedom of the birds is as much a part of the execution sequence as the stones around the prisoners' necks. Without both the sequence loses its meaning, just as does a linguistic trope when you separate its parts. The two shots are inextricably fused in the one image, producing a complete vision of reality.

The reason Greene disliked *Man of Aran*, and most of Flaherty's work, was that he did not find this kind of philosophical montage in its images, a montage which was above all dramatic. Flaherty tried to create such dramatic sequences artificially. In this instance he had taught the inhabitants of Aran to shark hunt. To Greene's realist eye this was unnecessary, for the drama of poetic contrast was implicit in the lives of the people of Aran. Flaherty did not need to create it by manipulating their lives; he merely needed to capture it in the critical sense Greene had spoken of.

What Greene was asking of the camera was that it should not lie. In *The Innocent Eye*, Calder-Marshall quotes Flaherty as saying that 'sometimes you have to lie . . . one often has to distort a thing to catch its true spirit.' Greene disagreed. Its true spirit was not in this kind of distortion but rather in the critical juxtaposition. This does not mean that he asked film to present a slice of life. Rather, he asked of it an honest, but critical and poetic representation of reality. He did not believe the audience could be fooled by Flaherty's kind of distortion. In contrast Greene offered Armand Denis' *Dark Rapture*, a film about Africa from which one carried away 'a sense of innocence, of human dignity reduced to its essentials . . . what Africa was before the white man came,' and George Hoellering's *Hortobaghy*, a film about the Hungarian plains acted by peasants and shepherds.

It was only when the audience recognised 'the truth of a general scene . . . that it was prepared to accept the truth of the individual drama,' and as a novelist Greene knew very well that it was the individual drama that expanded the consciousness of the audience. 'None of us believes very deeply in news . . . in the big events, the march of an army corps and the elimination of a people.' What makes us believe is a sense of involvement, which it was the camera's job to facilitate by noting with precision and vividness an 'atmosphere that would give the story background and authority.'

He found Carol Reed particularly good at this. 'Reed's camera went behind the dialogue . . . acting with a kind of quick shrewd independence . . . presenting its own equally dramatic commentary, so that the picture [here of suburbia in *Laburnum Grove*] seems to be drawn simultaneously from two angles.' The detail picked up by Reed's camera, and the authenticity of atmosphere it created, impressed Greene. Little did he know in 1936 when he concluded the review by saying 'Mr. Reed will prove far more efficient when he gets the script right,' that he himself would be providing the script, in fact two of them: *The Fallen Idol* (1948) and *The Third Man* (1949).

From these few examples one might suspect

that Greene's sympathies lay with the documentary movement, that he most often found cinema to be poetic in the images created under its auspices. It is true that he repeatedly praised Grierson and the GPO Unit, listing several of its films among his favourites; but they were not the majority on that list which included, among others, Cavalcanti's *Rien que les Heures*, Robison's *Shadows*, Pudovkin's *Mother*, Chaplin's *Gold Rush*, Stroheim's *Foolish Wives*, Clair's *The Ghost Goes West*, Chenal's *Crime et Châtiment*, Menzies' *Things to Come* and Eisenstein's *October*. He did, however, continually use the documentary's simple honesty to emphasise by contrast the pretensions of the feature film.

Thus he attacked the star system which stabilised the audience's attention on the star rather than on the film, allowing cheap, shoddy work to pass unnoticed. Similarly he spoke against the long film which usually had to be padded to fill two hours. He complained about the gaudiness of colour, asserting that it 'would put film back technically twelve years.' Later, realising that it had come to stay, he insisted that a way be found to use it 'realistically, not only as a beautiful decoration.' Stating that it must 'be made to contribute to our sense of truth,' he asked, 'can Technicolor reproduce with the necessary accuracy the suit that has been worn too long, the oily hat?'

Greene's choice of actors was also influenced by this concern for realism. Ingrid Bergman's first appearance in *Escape to Happiness* was one that 'didn't give the effect of acting at all, but of living.' She was 'as natural as her name . . . with a high-light gleaming on her nose-tip.' With Greta Garbo, 'you got an impression of immense force in reserve, an unexpressed passion of life. It was a quality of character rather than of acting . . . Neither she nor Paul Muni acted in this sense; they existed vividly and without apparent effort.' It was this same criterion which led him to praise French films for using realism more imaginatively than their British and American counterparts. So important was realism to him that he feared any attempt to use montage universally, even though he thought it would instantly raise the standard of film production, because he felt it would 'keep the mind at too high a tension . . . not allowing for the non-vital moments of life to be shown.' This would be unfaithful.

Greene's lack of compromise was well known in the film world. He belonged to no school and he regarded nothing as sacred. With equal acidity he attacked his fellow critics and Hollywood films. The former were corrupt. The latter were adolescent, vulgar, sentimental, hollow, and filled with exaggerated sex. Only occasionally 'did a film of truth and tragic value get somehow out of Hollywood on to the screen. Nobody could explain it—perhaps a stage needed using, all the big executives were in conference over the latest Mamoulian "masterpiece"—Jehovah was asleep, and when he awoke he found he'd got a *Fury* on his hands, worse still *They Won't Forget*.' 'What's the use in pretending,' he added while reviewing *The Road Back*, 'that with these allies it was ever possible to fight for civilisation? For Mother's Day, yes, for anti-vivisection and humanitarianism, the pet dog and the home fire, for the co-ed college and the campus.

Civilisation would shock them: eyes on the guide book for safety, they pass it quickly as if it were a nude in a national collection.'

His *bête noire* was the Board of Film Censors, which he complained allowed more freedom to the Americans than to its own poorer countrymen. His last and perhaps most telling attack against the Board came in 1940, when it gave *The Wizard of Oz* an A certificate. 'Surely,' he wrote, 'it is time that this absurd committee of elderly men and spinsters who feared, too, that *Snow White* was unsuitable for those under sixteen, was laughed out of existence?'

Only once were his remarks repressed, and then on legal not aesthetic grounds. The incident arose over his October 28, 1937 review of the Shirley Temple film *Wee Willie Winkie*, which appeared in his regular column in *Night and Day*, a kind of Londoner's *New Yorker* that listed among its columnists, in addition to Greene, Elizabeth Bowen, who reviewed the theatre, and Evelyn Waugh, who did books. Reviewing *Captain January* the previous year in the *Spectator*, Greene had written that Shirley Temple's popularity 'seemed to rest on a coquetry quite as mature as Miss Colbert's [in *Under Two Flags*] and on an oddly precocious body as voluptuous in grey flannel trousers as Miss Dietrich's.' This review seems to have caused no comment. The *Wee Willie Winkie* review was another matter. Shirley Temple (then aged eight) and 20th Century-Fox sued Greene, *Night and Day*, Hazell, Watson and Viney, Ltd. (the magazine's printer) and Chatto and Windus (its publisher) for libel, in a case that appeared before the King's Bench on March 22, 1938.

Greene's review cannot of course be quoted here. It was described by Sir Patrick Hastings, counsel for the plaintiffs, as 'such a beastly libel to have written that if it had been a question of money it would have been difficult to say what should be an appropriate amount to arrive at.' Godfrey Winn, writing in the *Daily Mirror*, thought the review 'a queer one, because it was not a criticism of Shirley's clever acting at all, but one which introduced potential audience reactions—reactions which were entirely alien to Shirley's lovable and innocent humour.' *Night and Day* had in the meantime ceased publication, the issue in question being withdrawn from the news stands, and Greene had left for Mexico after being assured by his lawyer, Valentine Holmes, that he had written nothing libellous, and that his name would not come up at the hearing.*

However, it did. In a rather comic sequence the judge asked repeatedly where Greene was, and Mr. Holmes repeatedly answered that he had no information on the subject. Holmes apologised (in order that the record be withdrawn) to Shirley Temple 'for the pain which would certainly have been caused to her by the article if she had read it' and to the two film companies (20th Century-Fox Film Corporation and 20th Century-Fox Film Company Ltd.) 'for the suggestion that they would produce and distribute a film of the character indicated in the article.' The *Wee Willie Winkie* libel case had put *Night and Day* out of

business, and reinforced the coffers of Shirley Temple, the Film Corporation and the Film Company to the tune of £2,000, £1,000 and £500 respectively.

The suit, however, had little effect on Greene's film criticism. His trip to Mexico, commissioned earlier by Longman Green who wanted a report on religious persecution there, was unhampered. Later in 1938, when he returned to London, he took up his old column in the *Spectator*, continuing to write well into 1940.

It is easy to assess Greene's film criticism. One has only to choose at random from the many reviews and articles to be entertained by a witty and creative journalist. However, it is more difficult to come to some reasonable understanding of its significance. Weekly reviewing after all leaves little space for the formulation of original theory.

Greene was reviewing during an exciting period in film history. His ideas about a common and poetic cinema were not unique: what he sought in the commonplace was similar to what John Grierson looked for. Both desired to make a drama from the ordinary. Both desired that the camera dig deeply into everyday life, capturing the things that most often went unnoticed. What Greene described as contrasting poetic images was similar, although greatly simplified, to Eisenstein's concept of montage, or to what he called in *Film Form* 'montage trope', which created 'a new quality of the whole from a juxtaposition of the separate parts.' Greene's desire to create for an audience what it wanted was similar to what Charlie Chaplin in fact did. It was the combination of these ideas that was unique. It came not from a film background but a literary one. This special combination arose from the enthusiasm of a young but already successful novelist who saw in the medium the 'possibility of a new kind of art . . . of a picture as formal in design as a painting, but a design which moved.' It came from an eagerness to popularise that new art by beginning at 'the level of *The Spanish Tragedy*' and moving slowly 'towards a subtler, more thoughtful level . . . where human values could be suggested.' It would be a movement the reverse of that from Webster to Tennyson, 'which was not merely a decline in poetic merit . . . but a decline in popularity.'

Greene was not a film theoretician, nor was film his primary interest. In fact, he has continued to claim that his involvement with the medium has been out of financial need (something one questions considering his unfortunate experiences with the cinema, and yet his continuing return to it). But although the film did not figure largely in his background before this period of intense critical activity, it is obvious that he nevertheless understood its aesthetic possibilities and the problem of popularisation confronting it. Greene called for films of imagination and vision, a cinema both poetic and common. It is unfortunate that as with so many other novelists who have worked for the medium, his ideas have had little effect on it.

Quotations are mainly from Graham Greene's 'Spectator' reviews. Also from reviews and articles in 'Fortnightly Review', 'Night and Day', 'Footnotes to the Film' and 'Sight and Sound'.

* Author's interview with Graham Greene.

Film REVIEWS

The Last Picture Show

In one of the final sequences of Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* (Columbia-Warner), two teenage boys miserably outgrowing their adolescence in the year 1951 attend the closing performance of the only cinema in the disintegrating town of Anarene, Texas. On screen, John Wayne surveys the cattle herd that fills the Texas plainland as far as the eye can see and orders, 'Take 'em to Missouri, Matt!' The boys agree that *Red River* was a good film and wander out into the deserted street, making no connection between the tumbleweed wasteland that surrounds them and its proud, and in part mythical, pioneer heritage. The only character old enough to remember better days and lament the emptying of the landscape (Sam the Lion, played by Ben Johnson, a sideshot rider from many a more recent Western) dies a short while before the town's cinema, his death somehow formalising the end of an epic era. For the boys themselves, there is nothing to mourn and little to aspire to. Too passive to rebel against the ever narrowing circles of their lives, they convert their frustration to instant regret, endlessly replaying their memory-brightened high school relationships like so many dusty gramophone records.

It is one of the cardinal virtues of this brilliantly understated film that Bogdanovich never takes the easy option of mingling his characters' nostalgia with his own, never allows his evident regret for vanished worlds and wasted opportunities to intrude directly on his film's impeccably detailed surface realism. That *The Last Picture Show* establishes, and holds for its full 118 minutes, a mood of elegiac wistfulness is due in some large measure to the sheer accumulation of unobtrusive detail. The

hero's 1941 Chevrolet pick-up truck, the sounds of Johnnie Ray, Frankie Laine and a host of Country-and-Western singers straining out of every diner loudspeaker and car radio, a brief clip from *Father of the Bride* on the boys' first trip to the movies, 'Strike It Rich' flickering half-watched on the living room TV screen: all of these awaken the audience to their own nostalgia and gently seduce them into an emotional complicity—not with the characters, who ignore or exploit the furniture of their lives, but with the director, who has so painstakingly brought it all back to life for us, and in so doing created an infinite hall of mirrors in which everyone, audience and characters, is wistfully looking over his shoulder at the receding image of his own pale paradise.

In their eagerness to herald Bogdanovich as the young director who will restore their national cinema to its former glory, American critics have zealously likened him to Welles and his second feature film (his first was *Targets*) to *Citizen Kane*. Yet the comparison is invidious as well as misleading. For if Bogdanovich stands out from the ranks of contemporary film-makers, it is not for any innovations of technique or subject matter but rather for the loving perfection with which he revives a vanished craftsmanship. Though the shadow of Welles, as well as of Hawks, hovers benignly over the picture, Bogdanovich refrains from dipping flamboyantly into the Master's box of tricks, content to chart, without dramatic punctuation marks, the quiet atrophy that gnaws at the lives of his inexorably and unknowingly doomed community.

The Last Picture Show is one of the very few films of recent years whose form and content seem, in the best Flaubertian sense, inseparable. It is not simply photographed in black and

white, it is evidently conceived in it, as being the only true colouring for these dust-blown streets and drab, draughty lives. Yet while Robert Surtees' photography triggers off some cinematic memories of the kind of movies they don't make any more (and already hardly made in the Fifties), it manages, like everything else in the film, to achieve a perfectly calculated balance between faultless realism and sentimental association. If the extreme depth of field photography contains conscious echoes of *Citizen Kane*, the screen ratio attests its more modern origins, while the lighting is matched to the unassertive naturalism of the performances. All the scenes, interiors as well as exteriors, were shot on location in the literally one horse town of Archer City, and the cramped rooms are lit to reflect rather than disguise or dramatise their quietly corrosive claustrophobia. Similarly the cast, made up of newcomers and established bit part players, are presented without the glamorous sheen and seductive shadows



Timothy Bottoms, Cloris Leachman

of the old style Hollywood lighting. Indeed, they seem at first to have been chosen for a common quality of anonymity; and if they gradually impose themselves—as characters, actors, even stars—it is through the conviction of their performances and the gradual revelation of their drab adventures.

This sustained downbeat emphasis is a crucial element of the film's success, since the novel by Larry McMurtry (whose *Horseman, Pass By* emerged as *Hud* after some revamping by Hollywood scriptwriters) might in less sensitive hands easily have been converted into the most excessive *Peyton Place* soap opera. All the ingredients are there, for it is not merely a saga of small-town life (that genre beloved of afternoon TV programmes in the States) but one whose events consist almost entirely of deaths and sexual couplings amongst the town's inhabitants. There is the local idiot boy run over by a cattle truck (ironically, the only cows in the film are penned in the back of a lorry); there's the high school coquette, Jacy, leading all the boys on, going steady with Duane, swimming nude with Lester, chasing after wealthy Bobby, raped on the pool table by her mother's lover, and eloping with Sonny to attract attention; there's Sonny, fumbling his way towards sexual experience in assorted automobiles, willingly seduced by Ruth, the football coach's wife, and half blinded by Duane in a fight over Jacy; and Duane himself, obsessed with Jacy and eventually shipped out to Korea, still brooding on the hour he spent with her in a motel.

Though he records the occasional moment

'The Last Picture Show': Ben Johnson, Timothy Bottoms, Sam Bottoms



of tenderness (mostly between Sonny and Cloris Leachman's Ruth, miraculously alternating a creased despair with a glowing radiance), Bogdanovich never shows a satisfactory sexual encounter or a moment of love that is not overlaid with pain. Sam the Lion's apocryphal fulfilment with Jacy's mother is a thing of the past, embellished by memory; and it is characteristic of the film's experimental relationships that Jacy emerges from her eager defloration by Duane complaining, 'I don't think you did it right.' Sex is simply one way (and with the picture show closed, almost the only way) of passing the time and escaping from the tedium of marriage, school or menial labour—a desperate assertion of power among the socially impotent. The field of choice is limited, and the acceptance of limitations is what growing up in Anarene is all about. When Sonny (Timothy Bottoms) learns that Ruth's husband will shoot him if he hears of their affair, he accepts this information without protest or excitement, as part of the established order of things, in the same matter-of-fact way that Duane accepts that he'll be back in a year or two if he doesn't get shot, and Sonny himself accepts the naturalness of his best friend damaging his eye in a fight.

Yet if the film's incidents cumulatively suggest a painful process of attrition, they are individually comic, even farcical, with Bogdanovich perfectly capturing both the aspirations and the bathos of the inarticulate pursuit of happiness. Cybill Shepherd as Jacy and Jeff Bridges as Duane in particular convey the awful solemnity with which teenagers make fools of themselves. It is in this unbridgeable gap between desire and performance that the film's real drama takes place, as Bogdanovich, keeping his audience in a suspended state of compassionate amusement, illuminates boredom from within and without and makes it entertaining.

JAN DAWSON

Macbeth

Polanski's is a cinema of obsession. In each of his feature films he has established a central, claustrophobic theatre of action, stressed its isolation by a running counterpoint with glimpses of the world outside, and used his characters' imprisonment as a catalysing force to bring their obsessions to a climax. Obsession can be either comic or horrifying, and Polanski's work has tended to split itself into two groups: the black comedies (*Cul-de-Sac*, *Dance of the Vampires*) and the psychological shockers (*Repulsion*, *Rosemary's Baby*). The settings have underlined the division: castles are extravagant and 'remote' and suit surrealist comedy, while apartments are contemporary and 'real' and suit psychological drama. Also despite a partial overlapping within these categories (shock effects in *Dance of the Vampires*, the black comedy of the last scene witches' soirée in *Rosemary's Baby*), Polanski's sense of humour and sense of horror are so strong individually that each tends to work only at the expense of the other. The first thing to notice about his film of *Macbeth* (Columbia-Warner) is that it represents a cross between these two groups: a castle setting is married to a 'psychological' drama, and there is, if not a comic, at least a more externalised, self-critical approach to potentially melodramatic material. Where *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby* veered at their worst towards sentimental contrivance, *Macbeth* locates the mental torment of its characters not in an indulgent novelistic limbo, but in a credible, historically detailed social context.

What the film lacks in claustrophobia it thus makes up for in general credibility. Apart from the passages of violence or dream (and striking momentary images like Duncan's crown throwing its gaunt shadow on Lady Macbeth's



'Macbeth': the witches' meeting on the beach

face), Polanski has eschewed ornate visual effects to concentrate instead on the continuity of medieval life, with details of social convention (the maidservants strewing dried flowers in the guest room before Duncan's arrival) and formal entertainment (bear-baiting, dancing). It is the stability of the social life evoked in these scenes that the Macbeths seem to violate, and the use of speeded-up film in Duncan's murder indicates how far their crime signifies a disruption of the natural rhythm of life.

The strength of the film is that it works concurrently on both a naturalistic and a psychological plane. *Macbeth* is a play of paradoxes, concerned with what is real and what is illusory—the role-playing of the Macbeths, the ambiguity of the play's supernatural manifestations, the witches' chop-logic predictions which 'cannot', but do, come true—and Polanski has built his film on a correspondingly ambivalent structure. The recurring long shot of Macbeth's castle, a gaunt rock projecting from an open plain, suggests at once its strength and its isolation and provides a metaphor for Macbeth's dilemma—he is most vulnerable when most powerful, most alone when most flattered and lorded.

Working on two simultaneous levels of reality, the film also blurs the theatrical line between dialogue and soliloquy, 'inner' and 'outer' drama. The speech 'If it were done when 'tis done' is cut into two parts, the first delivered as a voice-off interior monologue, Macbeth staring moodily across the banquet table while his wife and Duncan chatter at his side, the second half 'thought' and half spoken aloud by Macbeth as he paces the castle gallery after deserting the banquet. In this framework, where inner and outer experience merge and nothing can be patly dismissed as 'illusory', it is appropriate enough that Macbeth's dagger hangs garishly and palpably in the air (prompting critics to complain of Walt Disney crudity), and that the witches whom Macbeth describes as vanishing 'into the air' are in fact seen to scuttle down steps into an underground meeting-place.

The film's general determination to demystify makes its sporadic eruptions into violence or dream all the more telling. Duncan's murder is a flurry of rapidly intercut shots (knife piercing throat, crown spinning to floor), and the vision of the future shown Macbeth by the witches provides a swift, disorienting sequence

of incongruous images linked by the shots of a bubbling cauldron. In deliberate contrast, the climactic fight between Macbeth and Macduff becomes a slow, clumsy and fatalistic affair, illustrating not a violation of the natural order but the pragmatic destruction of a usurper. Violence, though seen as integral to the society *Macbeth* portrays, is thus also seen as having two sides—the deranged/subversive and the moral/punitive. In so far as this distinction predicates the existence of a natural order, serving as the criterion for moral judgment, the film tends to stress the play's medieval aspect; and the chief criticism one could raise is that Polanski's *Macbeth*, while re-creating the moral and social feel of the period, does not sufficiently illuminate the play for our own times.

There are other reservations. The changes that Polanski and Kenneth Tynan have made to Shakespeare's original all have a slightly gratuitous air. Ross has been transformed from an anonymous nobleman to an archetypal time-server, changing sides according to the way the political wind blows; in his second visit to the witches Macbeth stumbles upon an assembled coven of naked hags; in a brief and ominous epilogue, we see Donalbain (mysteriously endowed with a limp throughout the film) approaching the witches' refuge on foot. All these ideas serve to liven up the proceedings without quite seeming fundamental to a new version of the play, and it is the dynamic of a committed interpretation that the film basically misses.

Some of this enervation is reflected in the performances. Jon Finch speaks the verse competently but brings no real vigour or emotional substance to the part of Macbeth. Francesca Annis looks more promising, and makes much of Lady Macbeth's kittenish and neurotic coaxings in the early scenes; but the character's abrupt transition from provocateuse to insomniac has defeated most actresses, and in Tynan's heavily cut adaptation (a third of the text has been excised) the part makes even less sense than usual. A wealth of intelligence has clearly gone into every detail of the film's *mise-en-scène*, but there are times when the missing qualities seem to be precisely those that unified Polanski's previous work—a sense of the obsessional, the claustrophobic and the grotesque.

NIGEL ANDREWS

Punishment Park

With Nixon's China trip, and the November election looming, it's more than possible that American military involvement in Vietnam will be insignificant by the end of the year. Not so, according to Peter Watkins. In his new film the Vietnam war has escalated, with a corresponding upsurge of violent dissent. America is shaken by sabotage, the prisons are overcrowded, and in desperation the President has invoked the McCarran Act and set up nationwide detention camps, whence dissidents are hauled before citizen tribunals and offered a choice between prison and Punishment Park—a three-day assault course across the desert in search of the American flag. If you avoid capture by a pursuit squad of police and National Guard, freedom; if not, you serve your sentence. You may not survive the blazing days and freezing nights, and you may get picked off by trigger-happy Guardsmen; what you don't know, though you might have guessed it, is that the Stars and Stripes is an illusory haven. And all this, Watkins says, is happening tomorrow, yesterday, five years from now—'It is also happening today.'

The War Game was a projection into the not too distant future, a loud-voiced warning of things to come; *Privilege* was a fictional metaphor for a future shock. With *The Peace Game*, and now *Punishment Park* (The Other Cinema), Watkins presents what he calls allegory in the form of documentary. Angered, and not without justification, by the 'critical intolerance against my films', Watkins hits back with 'a cinema of feeling, of direct confrontation with ourselves.' For every damning critic's 'hysterical' or 'obsessed' he counters with 'fear syndrome', 'intellectual repression', 'a malaise common to us all'. Well, if you pull the dog's tail, you're asking to get bitten. In fact, *Punishment Park* is easily the best of Watkins' cinema pamphlets. As a film-maker he is not one to use gentle persuasion if he can shout instead, and 'obsessed' he may well be. But after so much anodyne posturing in the commercial cinema of late, a kick in the guts may be what we need.

This, at least, is how Watkins sees it, and like his other films *Punishment Park* is a frontal assault on the senses. He describes the method as a fusion of realism and expressionism. As the film jolts along, lurching between one group of dissidents in the desert and another arraigned before the tribunal, a simulated reality spirals into nightmare. The link to the world outside the desert is the media, British and German television teams who shadow the desert fugitives and zoom in on the highlights of the tribunal. The desert television crew, in the unseen voice of an interviewer/director, stands its distance only until they are involved in the violence to the extent of trying to intervene ('Oh, God, stop! Cut the camera,' screams the interviewer as the National Guard mows down a helpless quartet), thus neatly answering familiar doubts about the emotive neutrality of front-line television reporters; while at the same time, of course, raising even more awkward questions about the distance between the television unit we're assumed to be watching and Watkins' own team recording them. What we have, in fact, is the familiar Watkins double-take. We're being asked to believe what we know to be faked, while simultaneously being persuaded that it isn't faked. Not for the first time in a Watkins film, form and content are at once, and disturbingly, interdependent and in opposition. The telephoto lens repeatedly blurs the image, and it's more than just a heat haze. It's a method that is sometimes self-defeating, forcing a gap between film and audience (there's no disguising, finally, that the thing is faked); but it's also a method that grips you by the throat.

This time, at least, the tone—shrill, un-leavened by any distancing evaluation—is less alienating because more consistent. There are as usual too many barbs for the audience to catch

on, things like the doom-laden off-camera voice which periodically intones temperature levels and the facts of dehydration. But in detail at least we can believe what we see, even when we're troubled by the larger scheme. The reality of the American generational polarity is graphically registered. Paranoia straddles the fence, in the harassed faces of the tribunal members (housewife, senator, sociologist and so on) as much as in the ranting, self-pitying obstinacy of the accused. Their defence counsel makes allusion to Hitler and in the same breath calls his clients 'these strange and excluded people'; interviews with the tribunal during an alfresco lunch break elicit remarks about 'more spank and less Spock in America'. The pursuit team, whose cynical captain demonstrates their lethal weapons with an ice-cold lack of emotion, are just doing their job and anxious to do it well, even if it means a pimply 18-year-old trainee weeping into camera that his trigger pulled by accident. Everybody mouths the conditioned platitudes of Middle and disaffected America. If there was ever a communicating wire, it's been cut clean through, a point made crystal clear by the woman committee member's hysterical assault ('You're schizophrenic, you should be locked up') on a girl who might be her own. Written into the faces on both sides of the table is fear and incomprehension, and long since the end of the dialogue.

Violence, someone says, is the only thing that will provoke a reaction. And as a car radio picks up a Nixon address to 'forward-looking Americans', the soundtrack stutters with gunfire, screaming jets and unimaginable electronic noise. Watkins' future is predicated on a present imperfect, which is reasonable and right. What is less clear, and it's around the background reverberations that doubts begin to assert themselves, is the precise context for this collision course. The desert game, like the real game, makes no distinction between violent militant and pacifist reasoner, but we're given no indication of particular circumstances which caused this generality. Quite apart from the worrying certainty that if present speculation is future fact, then any speculation is valid in Watkins' terms, there's a nagging lack of documentation behind the film's persuasive specifics. What exactly is that war cacophony on the soundtrack? Why haven't the dissidents realised that Punishment Park is a frame-up (the news would surely have filtered through)?

Why put your trust in the American flag if your one aim is to destroy all it stands for? More seriously, what is this third alternative (an amnesty pledge) we're suddenly introduced to near the end, and why on earth doesn't someone take it? And yet more seriously, what exactly are those television crews doing in the desert? If the coverage is going out on NBC, as the interviewer tells the captain when things are getting out of hand, are we to assume that NBC is still allowed to transmit what can only be potentially subversive material? If not now, as Watkins keeps insisting, then certainly not in this future, where repression would long since have silenced the media as even neutral commentators.

As previously, verisimilitude falters when one starts to question the general credibility of Watkins' hypothesis. If this is an allegory, then its very real surface mitigates against its acceptance as such. And the more questions one asks, the larger the credibility gap. I don't think it's valid to attack Watkins (as many have done) for being a romantic masochist. The general malaise which he sees leading to Punishment Park is there for all to see; and as he says, anyone who doesn't see it is trapped by the game. It's just that some people don't see a bullet in the desert as the only end of the road. Watkins says we're losing touch with reality, which is why his film is an allegory. What he hasn't seen, or won't admit, is that other side of the reality which can offer an alternative possibility to his nightmare future. Oddly, though perhaps characteristically, he doesn't see this most political of films as being political.

DAVID WILSON

Modern Times

Critics are notoriously unwilling to call a masterpiece a masterpiece in case they wake up with red faces a week later to discover that it is nothing of the sort. Even allowing for critical caution, though, contemporary writers were out-of-the-ordinarily churlish about *Modern Times*, to judge from some of the nine reviews published in Alistair Cooke's recently reprinted *Garbo and the Night Watchmen*. The exceptions were Robert Forsythe (alias Kyle Crichton), who liked it for some slightly irrelevant leftist reasons; and Graham Greene, who had less

Fugitives in the desert in 'Punishment Park'



timidity than most when it came to naming masterpieces.

The rest of them complained in the same breath that Chaplin had dared to change—had been flattered into seeing himself as a mystic rather than a clown and had taken the little man out of his proper element, into the modern world—and that he had *not* changed; that his pictures were still flatly lit and cut in the fashion of 1914; that his evasion of sound by the use of schmalzy music and archaic sub-titles was an equal blend of cowardice and gall; that in any case the film was at best a retrospective anthology of his favourite old gags.

After thirty-six years all this seems a far-off whimpering, while the film begins to look, with all its faults, something like a masterpiece. Certainly it has done nothing but improve since the last time it came round, seventeen years ago. With the years the archaic techniques which seemed so affronting in 1936 have melted into a kind of timelessness. In any case, you feel, Chaplin knew very well what he was doing. There is every sign that he consciously recognised this was the last appearance of The Tramp, twenty-two years after his first appearance at Keystone in January, 1914. The optimistic end—for the first time Chaplin trots off towards the sunset and distant horizons not alone but in company with the girl, won at last—taken with the clown's ultimate discovery of a voice, gave the film an air of finality. In his next film Chaplin would be the Great Dictator and in the next, Verdoux. This was The Tramp's last fling and his last look at the world.

It is, as the critics in 1936 pointed out, a different world from the clapboard fences and dirt roads of rural California in the old slapstick shorts; the alleys which in Chaplin's films always took on a look of Victorian London. It is a world whose worries—industrial regimentation, strikes, riots, demonstrations, police brutality, drugs, urban pollution, the inhuman rigidity of bureaucratic social organisations—seem, oddly enough, even more contemporary now than in the Depression years when the film was made. But then, one of the qualities of Chaplin which now becomes clearer with this rediscovery of *Modern Times*, is the way he has of existing outside time. Just as the themes are still relevant to us, thirty-six years on, so the characters and the sentiments reach back to the nineteenth century. When he speaks of poverty and vagrancy, or shows the orphanage men taking children from a slum home, or shapes his vision of Paulette Goddard's sharp little waif, you sense acute memories

of the long ago reality of Chaplin's hard and formative boyhood. When towards the end he performs his great set-piece, the gibberish version of 'Titine', we see instantly and beautifully resurrected all the vitality and absurdity and incomparable techniques of the English music hall in which Chaplin was bred, and acquired the skills of comedy.

What skills they are, too. There is no sense at all in pursuing the old comparisons with Keaton, because the two comedians were, as we see most clearly here, poles apart. All they had in common was the chosen trade of creating laughter, and the impeccable command of mimetic technique. Keaton's was an art of understatement, of concealment; Chaplin's of virtuosity and display. Keaton in his great set-pieces always gave the impression of a man caught up in irresistible forces of nature (a whirlwind, flood, avalanche, or merely the force of gravity) and simply pitting his wit and physique against them. Chaplin's are brilliant, pyrotechnic exhibitions of theatrical pantomime. Keaton was primarily an actor; so was Chaplin (and on occasions a great one too), but he was first and foremost a *performer*—'the finest goddam ballet dancer in the business,' as W. C. Fields, intending deadly insult, called him.

The conveyor belt sequence which opens the film is a masterpiece of choreography. Chaplin is the man who simultaneously tightens two nuts on each of an endless series of mysterious components as they pass inexorably by him. A moment's inattention to brush away a fly causes chaos throughout the production line; and when finally he runs berserk it is to dance his way into a mad ballet, demonically attacking with spanners anything that looks amenable to tightening, including the bodice buttons of a busty lady passing by. There are similar impeccable compositions of mime and movement in the scene where, having inadvertently swallowed an elephant dose of joy-powder, he pirouettes out of the prison mess in the wake of a line of frog-marching convicts; and in the sequence where he roller-skates, blindfold, on the brink of an abyss—which hasn't much to do with the story, but is divine.

It is no use pretending that Chaplin is not a great clown. *Modern Times* was the film that began his eclipse with the intellectual critics, who complained that he had begun to take himself as seriously as some of them (by right, that is, as intellectuals) had done; that he was forgetting his job as an entertainer and fancying himself as a philosopher. But, looking at it now,

nobody could really confuse with philosophy these encounters of his Tramp with circumstances of modern life as self-evident as were the huge jealous husbands, angry matrons and other hazards of the world where Keystone comedy lived. Even when he came on to Verdoux and the idea of the contrast between private and official murder, the notion had the simple grandeur of comedy rather than any of the subtlety of philosophy. He never went beyond the clown's true function of holding up to nature a distorting mirror. Sometimes, of course, the reflections were illuminated with something like genius. It will always remain mysterious whether the famous scene where Charlie helpfully picks up a red warning flag which has fallen off a lorry, and runs after it, unaware that a mass demonstration has formed up behind him, is comedy or tragedy: either way it is an epic of a man as victim of his fate.

DAVID ROBINSON

The Decameron

At the end of the thirteenth century, Giotto took the almost heretical step of pioneering a naturalistic style to replace early medieval formalism in religious painting, and was able to transform, as a result, the city of Florence, the home town of Giovanni Boccaccio. With gleeful logic, Pasolini has taken the part of Giotto for himself in *The Decameron* (United Artists), playing him as a near-demented autocrat who uses faces from the market-place as inspiration for his fresco at Santa Chiara. Pasolini too has broken with some traditions in his time, explored the Holy City with Marxist feet, sung the praises of the street people, shown the unshowable and been well rewarded for it. Here, the director of *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* characteristically scratches his head while everyone else is saying grace, and finally studies his completed work with the query 'Why produce a work of art when it's so much nicer just to dream about it?' At these words, briskly slamming itself shut, *The Decameron* leaves us to grapple with various interpretations—for example, that to begin an enjoyable task is more pleasant than to complete it, that nothing ever turns out as expected, that the artist in general (and Pasolini in particular) is never satisfied with what he has achieved. Since Pasolini has always delighted in the contradictory, it isn't too surprising that *The Decameron* is open to each of these approaches: the director plainly enjoyed himself while making it, the mood is a startling change from everything he has done since *Uccellacci e Uccellini*, yet the film is not entirely a success and one suspects that Pasolini knew it.

Boccaccio's hundred stories were shared between ten narrators during their flight from the plague. Pasolini has selected eight of the stories plus the anecdote about Giotto (a ninth is credited but was later deleted from the film) and has dispensed with narration, instead using Franco Citti to convey some measure of continuity for the first half and himself for the second. That this device doesn't really work is mainly the fault of the editing, which, as with *Theorem* and *Pigsty*, has no time to waste on fades or dissolves but hustles *The Decameron* along at a brutal speed. With the earlier films this scalpel-sharp pruning was an advantage, but with Boccaccio's more meditative pace and well-savoured humour it all too often obscures the joke by understatement—we're well into each new story before we realise there's to be no more of the previous item.

The pace also curtails some of Pasolini's most extravagantly staged sequences, such as Giotto's vision of the Day of Judgment, or the abrupt and muddled parade of religious fanatics that apparently sets the scene for Ciappalletto's arrival at a northern town on a debt-collecting mission. To add to the confusion, Pasolini's

Chaplin in 'Modern Times': '...The Tramp's last fling'



performers aren't always at their best; Ninetto Davoli is allowed too much open-mouthed stupefaction, while Franco Citti, very much the big star these days, looks far too well-preserved to be plausibly on his death-bed. And although the faces of the Neapolitan non-actors are marvellously misshapen (with a horrific display of dental neglect), their awkward self-consciousness looks disappointingly genuine. What should have been a simple and spirited sexuality in the Boccaccio manner often has, on the contrary, the embarrassed air of contrivance.

Surface blemishes apart, however, *The Decameron* is so consistent with the familiar Pasolini outlook that one begins to see how Chaucer too will have attracted the director of *Pigsty*. Like Chaucer, whom he probably met and who certainly borrowed some of his stories, Boccaccio's themes were hypocrisy, betrayal and gullibility; his clerics were forever on the make, his young lovers perpetually gratifying their passions, his peasants endlessly submitting to deceit and usury. Pasolini's choices perfectly illustrate Boccaccio's range—the man who becomes a saint by the simple process of lying outrageously for his last Confession, the nunnery that takes full advantage of its well-endowed gardener, the priest who gives a practical demonstration of how his host's wife might be turned into a mare, the girl whose brothers commit murder as revenge for her willing adultery. The most outrageous story—not in what it shows but in what it says—is kept to the last: two friends vow that whoever dies first will return to tell the other what the next world is like, and when the survivor is duly visited he receives with delight and prompt action the news that sexual indulgence, contrary to the Church's view, is not regarded in Heaven as sinful. That Boccaccio was able to get away with such irreverence is surprising enough, but nothing like as incredible as the fact that 600 years later so little has changed that Pasolini can still use it as a scandalous punch-line.

Paradoxically, it is through the lack of inhibition that *The Decameron* is at its most convincing as a reconstruction of the *Duecento* period. The full frontals and the unmistakable couplings seem an attractive and natural part of the uproarious and uncomplicated lives that Pasolini shows us through the spectacular colours of Tonino Delli Colli's photography. As with *Oedipus Rex*, it is as if he had found a medieval community miraculously untouched and filmed it as it stood, the crumbling colonnades, the sparse furnishings, the lean countryside, the roughly functional costumes. Occasionally *The Decameron* halts on a face that one would swear only the Renaissance had known, like that of Maria Agnelli who plays Lizabetta in the curtailed story of the girl who hides her lover's head in a pot of basil. For its glimpses of this almost alien world, as well as for its sense of fun, *The Decameron* can be made welcome as an indication of the extension of Pasolini's skill. Sad that it also indicates the extent of his weaknesses.

PHILIP STRICK

Kotch

First expectations of how Jack Lemmon's distinctive personality as an actor will emerge in his first feature as director are somewhat disappointed by *Kotch* (Cinerama). The familiar extremes of that personality—a wishfully blind sentimentality and a feverish irascibility turning to bitterness—seem to have been dissolved in a comedy that is consistently cosy and amiable. Meandering along a path whose end is fairly clear from the start, the film's comic invention is of a limited and conventional sort, but its observation of character and other small, pleasurable discoveries made along the way are



Twiggy in 'The Boy Friend'

unusually alive and leaven the subject—the personal reintegration of two misfits—with a range of nuances. Any attempt to define *Kotch* has to take account of the fact that it is almost wholly a vehicle for Walter Matthau, that it is only tenuously connected with the problems of old age, and that the threatened sentimentality of the 'odd couple' relationship between an unwanted old man and an unwed pregnant teenager is kept firmly bottled, only to be uncorked briefly in the film's final minutes.

'Kotch' is Joseph P. Kotcher, a widowed septuagenarian whose increasingly vague and eccentric behaviour—emerging reluctantly from his enjoyment of amplified stereo and his own wandering train of thought to explain to a hostile mother that his patting of little girls' bottoms in the park is not the beginning of senile perversion but a time-honoured and sportsmanlike form of encouragement—is driving his daughter-in-law to distraction and an assortment of sedatives. Foiling an attempt to have him interned in an old people's home by proving he has more wit than their 'recreational structures' and ink-blot tests can allow for, Kotch takes off on his own, befriends Erica Herzenstiel (Deborah Winters), the family's ex-baby-sitter whose unwanted pregnancy has left her bewildered but determinedly independent, and eventually does the honours as midwife in a roadside ladies' room.

There is a curious split in Matthau's performance that somehow manages to make Kotch completely credible on two different levels. The mannerisms and general air of old age—dawdling, discursive conversation, a benignly abstracted expression and an elastic-limbed gait—are thoroughly duplicated. But the still active mind beneath it all operates on a mixture of good-natured egoism and mocking unconcern that is little different from Matthau's previous roles, whose slumbering charm always indicated a character grown old and world-weary before his time. Matthau's traditional other half, the various Jack Lemmon impersonations of a harassed, excitable figure of finicky scruples, has been dispersed through a succession of minor characters—most clearly Kotch's immediate family, but including the peripheral appearance of Erica's brother, who turns up at the motel with the adoption papers for Erica's imminent child, complains bitterly about the frustrations of his job, and then roars off back into the desert. In another way, this theoretically

absent character has been transformed in the girl herself. Erica accepts the old man's help gratefully but with a certain reserve, and the fact that their attitudes and preoccupations remain worlds apart helps maintain an edgy, tentative feeling to their relationship and gracefully plays down its most obvious aspect—their loneliness and mutual need.

Contributing to this air of a delicately balanced security is the film's roving through a variety of landscapes and a succession of domestic settings. Following Erica's impulsive comings and goings, and Kotch's bemused but patient trek in search of independence, Lemmon has included a much more convincing picture of motel civilisation than seemed to be possible in the film version of *Lolita*; while at the same time neatly transferring this particular senior citizen into the dislocated, homeless world of a younger generation.

RICHARD COMBS

The Boy Friend

As his ostensible subject has shifted from Lawrence's Midlands to Tchaikovsky's Moscow, to Huxley's Loudun, it's become apparent that, in his loudly trumpeted disrespect for classical values, Ken Russell consistently approaches his source material as a tattered poster upon which to scrawl those outsized and eye-catching graffiti that pass for an *auteur's* signature among less discerning critics of the Common Market countries.

Which is not to dispute Russell's status as an *auteur* (indeed, the very narrowness of his imaginative horizons seems a defiant *reductio ad absurdum* of the *auteur* theory), but rather to reproach him for the relentless weight with which he imposes his all-effacing mark upon the most disparate material. In his case, the intermediary is the message. Time and again, it seems, he mistakes his distorting mirror for a window on the world. Filtered through the looking glass, diverse landscapes and assorted sensibilities take on an inflexible sameness—a comic-strip frieze in which petty-minded puppets roll their bulging eyeballs to cavort in clashing costumes through gaudy decors. In a uniquely perverse process, his source material is first trivialised, then—in its newly impoverished form—inflated to epic proportions.



Clint Eastwood in 'Dirty Harry'

The latest casualty in this looking-glass war is Sandy Wilson's 1953 musical, *The Boy Friend*, an affectionately nostalgic piece, equally lacking in malice and epic ambition, involving some pretty melodies and a tiny orchestra: a consciously minor-key reaction to the succession of brash American shows that were invading the London stage at the time. True to form, Russell begins by filming not the work itself, but a ragged repertory production of it. This device provides a pretext for having most of the numbers sung out of tune and enables Russell, as *cinéaste*, to impose his caricatural vision by dwelling on the grotesque hyperboles of theatrical make-up (thereby eclipsing the fragile dignity of Sandy Wilson's characters in the monstrous indignity of his own provincial troupers).

By setting this tatty production in some ill-defined twilight zone between the Twenties and Thirties, Russell further robs *The Boy Friend* of its nostalgia, and leaves it looking simply anachronistic. (A characteristic joke is the casting of the well-endowed Barbara Windsor as a flapperish maid, forever squirming in her excessively short shift.) Whether they are on stage or off, we are invited to sneer at his puppet characters, and the price asked for our smugness is admiration for the puppet-master himself. For having demolished a charming minor work, Russell sets out to resuscitate it as a spectacular extravaganza. As the scenery falls over, the chorus dance out of time and the understudy dries up, the frustrated Portsmouth producer (Max Adrian dressed as Noël Coward) conjures up the flashy production he would like to have staged, while in the audience, visiting Hollywood director De Thrill—dressed like a Chicago gangster, but in his mind's eye kitted out as von Sternberg—dreams of filming the entire show Busby Berkeley style.

The result is an infuriatingly discordant mosaic, in which the large, brassy orchestrations wage a war of nerves on the delicate tunes, as rival artistic styles compete for our attention. In much the same way as his repertory cast resort to escalating outrages in their attempts to upstage one another and attract De Thrill's attention, Russell's musical numbers succeed one another like entrants in a beauty contest, each soliciting admiration while no less transparently revealing the model she aspires to emulate. But Russell's versatility proves a poor substitute for sensitivity, just as his pastiches prove a poor substitute for Busby Berkeley's

originals. Divorced from any temporal context, his brightly coloured images achieve no resonance, appearing merely as expensive doodles. Thus in one typical conjunction, 'A Room in Bloomsbury' is transformed, for no obvious reason, first into a fantasy stage set with giant chairs and tables, then into a kind of leprechauns' school outing, as myriad pixies and elves disport themselves on gigantic toadstools.

But there is one element in Ken Russell's *The Boy Friend* (MGM-EMI) that really works, and that is Twiggy, cast as the bespectacled understudy who steps into the lead when the star (Glenda Jackson, irritably shushing the audience as they applaud her substitute) sprains her ankle. Since the plot has her rushed on to the stage before she can grab the greasepaint, Twiggy is spared the disfiguring effects of Russell's theatrical make-up, and her natural beauty (which has no need of the surrounding ugliness to set it off) is strong enough to survive even the director's practice of placing his camera dangerously near to his performers' larynxes. Since she is not supposed to be playing an actress, she is also excused from the histrionic excesses of the rest of the cast and allowed to proceed with a welcome, and recognisably human, naturalism. She has a clear, sweet voice that restores the songs to some of their original innocence, and serves as a wistful reminder of just how much nicer—and quieter—the stage version was.

JAN DAWSON

Dirty Harry

After his teasingly attractive venture through the looking-glass into Tennessee Williams country with *The Beguiled*, Don Siegel returns to his own terra firma in *Dirty Harry* (Columbia-Warner), yet another tale of a tough cop who rides roughshod over rules and principles to get his man. The place is San Francisco, with dark alleys and spotless skyscrapers rubbing unlikely shoulders in Bruce Surtees' admirable photography, and a maniac killer holding the city at bay, casually picking off his victims and announcing the next target—'a nigger or a Catholic priest'—as he waits for a decision on whether his ransom demand is to be met. A helicopter circles overhead, checking the high, flat-topped buildings, each picketed by an armed guard. Only one is left unguarded as a temptation to the mad sniper, and Detective

Inspector Callahan, known as Dirty Harry (Clint Eastwood), moves in for the kill.

The main difference from *Madigan* or *Coogan's Bluff*, apart from the fact that the action is kept tautly strung to the end instead of sagging into moralising asides, is that this time Siegel and his scriptwriters make no bones about their endorsement of the hero's high-handed actions. In fact they go rather out of their way to give Dirty Harry their seal of approval by having the camera, in the opening sequence, pan reverently down the roll of honour of San Francisco policemen who have lost their lives in the line of duty. We then watch him spring into action to foil an armed robbery (as neatly choreographed a gunfight as you are likely to see this side of Ford), swing high up on a fireman's ladder to talk down a suicide jumper, and stake his own life by walking into an ambush in a bid to trap the killer. He succeeds, only to find that legal red tape is on the side of the criminal, who not only murders and rapes but thoroughly enjoys it, and who will go free because his rights have been infringed.

Legally speaking there are several yawning loopholes hereabouts, but the film makes its point forcefully—the same one Chandler's Lt. Christy French was grumbling about nearly twenty-five years ago in *The Little Sister*: 'It's like this with us, baby. We're coppers and everybody hates our guts. . . Nothing we do is right, not ever. Not once. If we get a confession, we beat it out of the guy, they say, and some shyster calls us Gestapo. . .' In Clint Eastwood's excellent performance, guarded, solitary, self-assured, Callahan comes over as almost the perfect cop, one who can afford to shoot first and ask questions afterwards because he *knows*, he can read the signs as clearly as an Indian on the trail, and he is right. The pity of it is that the film, not content to leave it at that, rams its point home (the equivalent of Gestapo nowadays is pig) by making the 'victim' of Dirty Harry's 'Fascist' attentions not merely a snarling sadist but a long-haired hippie who sports a peace symbol belt-buckle. It looks suspiciously as though, with *The French Connection* as another exhibit, the police of America are looking to the cinema to polish up their tarnished image, just as the various professions used to do in Hollywood's halcyon days.

Thematically, in fact, *Dirty Harry* could do with a touch of self-doubt, an acknowledgment along the lines of *Touch of Evil* that a man can act wrongly for the right reasons. Considered purely as a thriller, however, it is Siegel's best in years: the killer (a fine, edgy performance by Andy Robinson) casually letting his sights stray over the people strolling in the gardens below, suddenly panicking as his chosen victim momentarily disappears, then grinning in anticipation as the little negro queer in the purple poncho reappears and obligingly sits down on a bench; the weird treasure hunt, with the life of a girl hostage as stake, from phone booth to phone booth all over the city as Callahan desperately follows the killer's whimsical instructions on how to deliver the ransom money; the silent, echoing park where Callahan and the killer finally meet at the foot of a huge stone cross, and where the latter, acknowledging a stab wound with a wild, feral cry, bounds off like an animal into the jungle. As so often, though, the colour is a mistake: dark and nocturnal, *Dirty Harry* cries out for black and white.

TOM MILNE

Millhouse: A White Comedy

The best way to show off your political opponent as an ass is to hire a hall for him. That's what *Millhouse: A White Comedy* is about—the Emperor without a stitch on. No politician could survive Emile de Antonio's collage of old

television and movie footage. We all, and politicians more than anyone, would appear ridiculous or stupid or evil if someone were to edit our worst moments into a full-length public exhibition. Richard Nixon has had much more than his share of such moments. But, says de Antonio, 'If all this film does is pander to your Nixon prejudices, then the film is a failure.'

There is pandering footage inserted in this film, but de Antonio has something else in mind. In each of his major documentaries—*Point of Order*, *Rush to Judgment* and *In the Year of the Pig*—he has devoted himself to ripping away the veils to expose a major American institution: the U.S. Senate, the FBI and the Warren Commission, the U.S. Government's foreign policy apparatus. In *Millhouse* de Antonio is after no less than the entire traditional political process. The film is 'not at all a personal attack on Nixon,' de Antonio told me in an interview for *Film Quarterly* (Fall, 1971), though it is indeed personal. 'The film attacks the System, the credibility of the System, by focusing on the obvious and perfect symbol for that System.'

Though the collage effect seems more hastily patched together than in de Antonio's other films—a bit of sloppiness that just stops it from emerging as the cinematic equivalent to John dos Passos' famous collage novel, *U.S.A.*—*Millhouse* does have an artistic cohesiveness, a tough political core, and even a beginning-middle-end format.

The Beginning. Nixon's real middle name is spelled Milhous: de Antonio invented a deliberate misspelling, he said, both to resonate some fiction-like ambiguity (silly and unnecessary), and to suggest references to the traditional political mill, the White House, the old grinding mill-house out of America's early past. The 'white comedy' subtitle relates also to the White Anglo Saxon Protestant nature of the Nixon administration and constituency. (Almost never in this 25-year chronology does one see a Negro.)

In the opening moments of the film, we see a literal 'Making of the President', as technicians in Mme. Tussaud's wax museum put the finishing touches to Nixon. As they adjust his head, comb his hair, fix his tie, the audience laughs since Nixon does indeed come across as devoid of human emotion. Some critics have called this footage a cheap shot—the same joke could be played with the wax images of Lincoln, Washington, FDR, and what would the film-maker be saying? There is, however, a justification for this footage other than the easy titters it generates. The opening editing 'trick' takes on political meaning as the film progresses: throughout the film de Antonio has assembled footage of the real-life Nixon exactly duplicating the wax-pose. Also, at one point he uses footage of the then Premier Ky—our man (nequin) in Saigon—shot from precisely the same angle as the Nixon image in the museum. (Mrs. Nixon appears to be on loan from Mme. Tussaud throughout the film.)

The Middle. Nixon has provided the American political audience with many memorable scenes

and soliloquies—some comic, some tragic, some simply in abominable taste—and they're all here in *Millhouse*. For the young, who did not have the privilege of living through some of the more choice moments of Nixon's early political life, the man on the screen is merely a bad comedian; albeit a dangerous one. To those who can recall aspects of his rise to power, the film is an unfunny reminder that what Nixon represents is an unusually successful political style which preys upon the fears, myths and insecurities of a willingly misled body politic.

Here is Nixon addressing a group of Republican supporters in his home town of Whittier, California: 'There used to be orange groves here, lemon groves, avocado trees,' he says, with a sweep of his arm. 'Now they're gone—replaced by homes, buildings, industry. That's progress! That's America!' Or Nixon urging the death penalty for those who deal in drugs; or Nixon's famous 'Checkers' speech; or his press conference after he lost the California governorship in 1962 when, in a moment of rare emotion, he told reporters, 'Well, you won't have Nixon to kick around any more because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference'; or Nixon telling Khrushchev in the famous 'kitchen debate' that the U.S. will emerge victorious in the Cold War because America can produce more and better TV sets (Khrushchev gets the translation and rolls his eyes in disbelief); or Nixon campaigning to end the war in Korea and saying all those things we wish he would say about Vietnam during his own Presidency; or Nixon reportedly referring to himself as 'the egghead of the Republican Party'; or Nixon calling Hubert Humphrey 'a dedicated radical'; or Nixon, with his mouth slightly open in shocked surprise, watching a go-go dancer wiggle her equipment mere inches from his face at a White House reception. It's all there.

De Antonio, as usual, has culled these gems from the abandoned mines of old television and movie footage. In addition, he did some interviewing on his own, particularly of respected journalists who have covered Nixon over the years: Jules Witcover, author of *The Resurrection of Richard Nixon*, columnist Jack Anderson, editor James Wechsler, and, most importantly, Joe McGinniss, author of *The Selling of the President*, the book which describes how the image of the 'New Nixon' was forged during the 1968 television campaign. During that race, Nixon often broadcast what appeared to be unrehearsed, spontaneous press conferences. De Antonio shows footage of the studio warm-up man, while the voice of McGinniss describes how the carefully selected audience was coached to respond to Nixon's remarks.

De Antonio also went back to Nixon's home town to interview the President's college sweetheart. Her remarks are simple and revelatory. Though asked several times to recall anecdotes about the young Nixon, she can't—a lack which speaks volumes. However, one of the future President's early political campaigns is described. Nixon was running for student

body president at Whittier College on a pledge to fight for the right to have dances—a popular issue with the students which he himself did not favour. But that's where the votes were, and he won; a lesson he never forgot.

At several key points during this central section of the film, where de Antonio attempts chronologically to follow Nixon's rise to power, things get rather sketchy. By attempting to cover so much ground—a little time here on the two California congressional races in the mid-1940s, and a little time there on Nixon's vendetta against Alger Hiss—de Antonio's treatment is inevitably much too fast and superficial, and the film loses its hard-driving focus.

It is Nixon who is always at the centre of this little comedy, but it is de Antonio's essentially anarchistic outrage at the American political process in general that keeps intruding. There are periodic intercuts of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Herbert Hoover, Joe McCarthy, J. Edgar Hoover—reminding us that they all behave this way, some more smoothly than others. There is a hilarious bit of editing (quite different from anything de Antonio has done in his previous films) that makes this type of denunciation explicit. Nixon, with Eisenhower seriously ill in hospital, tells the assembled Republican delegates, 'Let's win this one for Ike.' There is an immediate cut to the famous locker room scene in the Knute Rockne film where Pat O'Brien asks his Notre Dame football team to 'Win this one for the Gipper.' A pan shot to the hospital bed where the Gipper lies swathed in bandages—it's Ronald Reagan!

The End. Toward the close of the film, Nixon is heard to say that the U.S. has no deep economic interests in Vietnam, that the U.S. wants nothing in Vietnam—at which point de Antonio flashes a one-minute crawl up the screen of about 40 major U.S. corporations that are cleaning up in Vietnam. . .

The essential shallowness of the American political tradition is made manifest in the last shots in the film, when a proud President Nixon introduces his Cabinet to a nation-wide TV audience. Like good little boys who have performed all the traditional American political and business rituals, they stand like washed-out Xerox copies—white, bland, pasty-faced, anonymous, eager, interchangeably ambitious politicians. In the background, we feel we can almost hear the whirr of the tired American machine which grinds these products out.

Millhouse is a smash hit in the U.S., playing to packed houses in at least 30 major cities. The young are coming to laugh at this pitiable spectacle; the old are grim with their memories. The Democratic Party already has approached de Antonio to purchase the rights to the film, presumably to use the more damaging segments in the coming Presidential campaign. But de Antonio won't sell. 'I didn't make this film to elect Democrats,' he told me. 'I made it to reveal the terrible comic theatre that is American politics.'

BERNARD WEINER

Anti-Cinema: Fassbinder

from page 100

face value, and crime and the force of law exist indistinguishably in the same figures.

Fassbinder's self-criticism here is implicit in the character of the killer's neurotically adoring younger brother, whom he bluntly ignores when he visits his mother's home, where an old piano and a pinball machine seem to be the only concessions to furniture. His brother sees him shot down—in a long slow motion dance of death—and then virtually rapes the dead body as it lies

under the mocking gaze of row upon row of station left-luggage lockers. An ironically inapposite theme song in English ('So much tenderness') repeats itself as Fassbinder holds this last shot until it offends the audience. It's a ludicrous scene, and that is Fassbinder's point: the traditional American gangster is finally dead, in a double sense, and to try to revive him is folly.

Self-awareness, and its implied self-criticism, is a key factor in Fassbinder's films. It is present again, along with the caustic humour which often accompanies it, in his most recent film *Warning of a Holy*

Whore, which I wrote about from Venice last year. This film, in which a movie director and his cast and unit indulge emotional cannibalism as they wait stranded by lack of money and equipment in a luxury hotel, is Fassbinder's most conscious statement of the boundaries as well as the far horizons of film as a form of self-expression. Like all his films (I haven't seen *Whity* or *Pioneers from Ingolstadt*, but by report they are characteristic), it reveals an innovative director very much alive to the cinema's capacity for deception. The holy whore is the cinema. ■

BOOK REVIEWS

THE NEW DOCUMENTARY IN ACTION: A Casebook in Film Making

By Alan Rosenthal

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS,
\$11.95

In this interesting series of interviews with twenty-two documentary film-makers on both sides of the Atlantic, there is much talk of 'objectivity', 'manipulation', 'censorship' and 'truth'. Naturally enough: the documentary film concerns itself with portraits of real life. But these are difficult words to use. On the other hand, everyone knows what he means by them. This book is about how difficult it is to convince others you're right.

Some quarters of the real world under investigation know that they have something to conceal which even a hazy sketch of their activity would show up: a lot of American food monopolies, for instance, simply wouldn't talk to writer-producer Jack Willis when he was trying to expose their enormous profits in *Hard Times in the Country*. On the other hand, others genuinely believe that a false picture would be bound to emerge from any filmed investigation and so refuse to co-operate or, if they have the power, suppress it. Among villains here named are large broadcasting corporations such as CBS and the BBC, as well as governments of all shades.

Some film-makers again are convinced that they pursue the facts objectively. Still others believe no such pursuit is possible and that only a strongly partisan case is the honest one. To all of them the words above naturally mean different things. There is a further confusion, not much stressed here, which is that the 'reality' that documentary may deal with is of two quite distinct kinds. One relates to facts such as 'The Idaho and Illinois Meat Packers United made a pre-tax profit in 1969-70 of \$42m.' (I quote an imaginary example.) The second is a matter of more conjecture: whether the opinion or emotion or personal situation represented is genuine or contrived; and then whether it is, even if genuine, entirely unaffected by the circumstances of being filmed.

It's worth clearing this amount of air before thinking about the experiences recorded in this book, otherwise a general and fruitless sense of grievance will emerge against all the obstacles set in the way of that modest and high-

minded spirit, the documentary film-maker. In connection with the last category noted above, Allan King, who made *A Married Couple*, is perfectly frank:

'Billy and Antoinette in the film are not Billy and Antoinette Edwards, the couple who exist and live at 323 Rushton Road. They are characters, images on celluloid in a film drama. To say that they are in any other sense true, other than being true to our own experience of the world and people we have known and ourselves, is philosophical nonsense.' King and his editor Arla Saare admit that they freely interfere with the chronology of the events filmed: for example, one affecting scene in which the wife Antoinette sits on Billy's lap weeping is so placed that the display of emotion has a precise and telling implication. It is untrue as a historical record, though it may be in a general way representative of their relationship. The attitude in which these decisions were approached is seen clearly in this answer from Arla Saare: 'The problem was where to put the car fight. We juggled, I would say, for a good six weeks, Allan and I. We juggled the car fight; we had it early, we had it late. . .'

Anyone who has ever made films will recognise these words only too well. But it's not always that the juggling is in the context of a couple's private life or of a marriage which is possibly breaking down. Where are the limits of interference here and who is recognising them? If the Edwards couple in the film are playing up to the camera to the extent of not being the real Edwards, then what's the point of the exercise? (I'm not saying there isn't one—but what is it?) If they are playing for real, then are we right to eavesdrop on this private struggle? And however hard the Edwards try to keep their balance, is it not possible that their relationship is not only affected by the *filming*, but also by the *film*? That's to say that, subsequently seen, this record of their marriage becomes, not only for us, but for them too, the 'true' one and the one which will colour their future?

It has to be said that King and his colleagues are unimpeachably honest in their intentions and devoted to what they regard as the responsibilities of their job. The same could be said for most of the contributors to the book, although some of them are operating in less equivocal areas. It's rather refreshing, for example, to come across

this question and its answer from Jack Willis:

'Q: In England, there is a certain tradition of equal time for both sides, and another concept of always balancing an attack by a defence. In *Hard Times* it's all attack.

WILLIS: Sometimes there aren't two sides to an argument. They're cheating on us. They are charging us too much money for food. There's no two sides to that.'

By the sound of it this is exactly the kind of 'prejudiced' work that would have to be 'balanced' internally by a stout meat-packing defence if it was offered to the BBC. The BBC has a particular duty in the direction of balance since it is publicly financed, but the principle of balance can be unimaginatively (or indeed imaginatively) applied to stifle strong opinions, especially those you don't agree with (i.e. unbalanced ones). Peter Watkins speaks up strongly here about the way in which *The War Game* was turned down by the BBC, but his severest word is for the Home Office who, having refused help themselves, then instructed all other civil organisations, including the police, to do the same. Rosenthal seems marginally to favour the BBC's record in this field to the Americans; but he makes an implied criticism of the Corporation when he attributes part of *Cathy Come Home*'s success to it being a play 'that felt no need for British balance. It condemned unequivocally.'

'Condemn unequivocally,' then, might seem the magic formula, but the Loach/Garnett/Mercer *Family Life* has been sternly criticised for doing just that about National Health treatment of mental patients. What Loach might regard as unequivocal his critics regard as unfair, i.e. suppressive of parts of the truth. Roger Graef's recent BBC documentary on *The Family* covered almost exactly the same ground but with a real family and without dramatisation. The honest result is perhaps more equivocal than *Family Life* about some things, but in swinging away from criticism of public institutions it courts once more the dangers of personalisation. Seeing the film afterwards, the disturbed family were perhaps no less a prey to its presentation of their relationships than the Edwards were. And for some people there was a sense of discomfort that the pursuit of general 'truth' should have to be at the expense of such particular revelation. Mr. Rosenthal's book is invaluable evidence for exactly this kind of debate.

GAVIN MILLAR

GREED: A FILM BY ERICH VON STROHEIM

Edited by Joel W. Finler

LORRIMER PUBLISHING,
£4.95 (Cloth), £1.95 (Paper)

Of the potentially great unfinished and bawdier works with which film history is strewn, Eisenstein's *Que Viva Mexico!* and Stroheim's

Greed are probably the saddest cases. Eisenstein's tragedy has been chronicled in several works; now Lorrimer has added to their valuable collection of international scripts the original version of *Greed*, adapted from the script published by the Belgian Cinéma-thèque in 1958, annotated against the release print by Joel Finler with a clear indication of all the cut material, and laid out in such a way as to bring Stroheim's visual methods brilliantly to life. As is well known, Stroheim's original was in two parts, lasting 42 reels; after M-G-M had protested, he reduced it to 24 reels. Rex Ingram then got it down to 18 reels and the final *coup de grâce* was administered by an anonymous cutter who produced the standard release version of 10 reels (or just over two hours).

The main questions posed after reading this enormous 300-page script are: could the film have worked at its ten-hour length, and was it necessary? Stroheim's initial decision that the only way to preserve the power and pessimism of Frank Norris' novel was to film it virtually intact, suggests that he must have been aware of the commercial folly of the undertaking. Faced with an unwieldy monstrosity, the various cutters responded by eliminating entire subplots and complete sequences. Gone completely are the episodes featuring Zerkow, the junk dealer (Cesare Gravina), and Maria, the charlady (Dale Fuller), whose bizarre dreams of gold were meant to parallel and parody the relationship between Trina and McTeague; the romance between an old lady and gentleman in the house where McTeague practised his dentistry; most of the scenes involving Trina's family at home; the entire sequence after her murder showing McTeague's wanderings before he reaches Death Valley; and much of the slow, detailed transition of Trina from the sweet, timid wife to the miserly shrew. Most unhappy, perhaps, is the omission of all the early sequences showing McTeague's life in the mining camp and his arrival in San Francisco, where the leading characters were gradually introduced. Most of these sequences were Stroheim's own inventions and not based on the novel; about fifty pages of script are devoted to beautifully detailed visuals (interrupted only occasionally by titles) in which one can see how graphically Stroheim was using the San Francisco streets, boarding houses and family parlours to establish his characters in their surroundings.

Real doubts begin to occur when one reaches the main body of the story. Apart from obvious bits of padding and repetition (which Stroheim himself might have eliminated, as he probably altered other things as the film was being shot), some of the symbolic elements, notably shots of birds in cages intercut with the human action, appear as awkward on the page as they do on screen. The

great insoluble question is, of course, whether Stroheim could actually have sustained the inexorable piling up of detail over such a wide span. Certainly, the script is rarely boring, being full of little bits of business—including the kind of broad caricature of bourgeois life which he delighted in—together with grotesque images of grasping hands and shining coins seemingly designed to transcend the literal, naturalistic scope and shape of the original.

Apart from the subplots, most of the narrative embellishments went as well. Thus, at the beginning of Part Two, we have a cut scene showing an Easter holiday on the streets with Marcus parading on a horse, followed soon after by an elaborate quarrel between Trina and McTeague ending in a marvelous set-piece showing her coveting her money. Of 28 pages of script, only two actually appear in the released film. And this is the pattern throughout, with Stroheim consciously probing and dissecting with the expansiveness normally found only in the 19th century novel.

In the event, it would probably have been unbearable, even in the 24-reel version. And yet, as some bizarre description flashes up from the page, one longs to see it in motion. . . Stroheim of course stated that 'the rest of the negative was burned to get the 43 cents worth of silver out.' Nevertheless, persistent, unsubstantiated rumours have recently emanated from America suggesting that an original print or negative has been found somewhere. Or is it waiting, damp and decaying, to be uncovered in some forgotten vault?

JOHN GILLET

THE AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE CATALOG OF MOTION PICTURES PRODUCED IN THE UNITED STATES:

FEATURE FILMS 1921-1930

Executive Editor: Kenneth W. Munden

R. R. BOWKER COMPANY,
NEW YORK & LONDON, \$55

I feel like a man, having spent his life trying to light fires with flint, who is suddenly presented with a butane lighter. For more than a decade I have been steadily building up a filing index of every American silent film, listing cast and technical credits. Information for silent films is extraordinarily hard to find, and unless you have access to the film itself, you have to spend hours poring over trade papers, year books and fan magazines. And none of these sources is reliable.

Now, after only three years work, the American Film Institute has produced a *Catalogue of Feature Films, 1921-1930*. It is the answer to a film historian's prayer, for it is an alphabetical list of every American feature made during those years, with cast, credits, synopsis, date, length, copyright number and the gauge it was shot

on. (Almost every film was 35mm, but one or two titles, such as *The Big Trail*, were shot on both 35mm and 70mm.)

As if that weren't enough, there is a second volume, almost as heavy as the first; an index of every name included in the catalogue. As a final flourish, there is a subject index. Not simply 'Westerns' and 'Thrillers': this index covers every subject known to man. Look up films about fish, for instance. The catalogue will tell you, curiously, to look up the particular species. Hundreds of titles are listed under 'filial relationships'. And 'Hollywood' steers you to some unknown titles that will ruin the sleep of any film collector. Rupert Hughes' *Souls for Sale*, for instance, made for Goldwyn in 1923 (I might casually mention the New York premiere was 27th March, its release followed on 22nd April, and it was copyrighted ten days earlier), features such celebrities as Chaplin, shown directing *Woman of Paris*, Stroheim, shown directing *Greed*, and Fred Niblo, shown directing *The Famous Mrs. Fair*. Other Hollywood personalities playing themselves: Bessie Love, Dagmar Godowsky, Marshall Neilan, ZaSu Pitts, Florence and King Vidor and Chester Conklin. (The picture has been lost for nearly fifty years, but Eileen Bowser, of the Museum of Modern Art, saw it in Czechoslovakia recently, and is negotiating an exchange.)

The Catalogue is one of the few absolutely indispensable works for the serious film enthusiast. The enormous amount of work that has gone into it will almost certainly lead to a plethora of get-rich-quick film histories. The Catalogue makes life so easy that a sociological review of the films of the Twenties could be dashed off between the Late Show and the Late Late Show. While the two volumes are extremely expensive, the cost is laughable in comparison with the value.

Anyone who has published a film history—or a history of any sort—will be extremely sensitive about errors and misprints. There is hardly a printed work without them, so it is no slur on the careful cross-checking of the cataloguers to point out that both volumes have a lot of mistakes. No computer—let alone a human—could possibly produce such a massive work without a flaw. (The computer used for this job grew exhausted towards the end of Volume One and planted *The Blue Mountain Mystery* among the Ws on page 899.) Sidney Franklin, the director, is muddled up with Sidney Franklin the actor. Ernest Schoedsack was making *Grass* when the Catalogue says he was photographing *Greed*—and he gets no credit for photographing much of the next item, *The Greek-Turkish War in Asia Minor*. Ben Carré was the art director on *The Light in the Dark*, not the cameraman.

It is the responsibility of those of us who know something about the films of this period to list those mistakes which can definitely be



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proved, and send them in to the American Film Institute as soon as possible. The second edition can then be corrected.

A vast number of credits can never be checked. M-G-M took very little notice of individual contributions; they simply listed the head of the department. If Cedric Gibbons did the art direction on every picture he was credited with, he would have broken Olympic records running from set to set. Sometimes as many as six directors worked on a picture, but only one received the credit. *The Cossacks* is credited to George Hill. Nils Asther, who played the second lead, never even saw George Hill on the set, because the picture was largely reshot and re-cast by Clarence Brown. So the Catalogue can never do more than list the official version, although helpful notes often indicate where doubt exists.

In an hour's perusal of the Catalogue, I have learned more valuable information than in a year's output of run-of-the-mill film books. As I scatter my filing cards to the winds, I send fervent thanks to the team who put the Catalogue together: Kenneth Munden, executive editor, Lee Atwell, Patricia Ann Bledsloe, Harvey Deneroff, Harold Blanchard Greenwood, Barbara Humphrys, Frances Jones and Stephen Zito. They can be as proud of their work as some of the more famous names listed in their magnificent Catalogue.

KEVIN BROWNLOW

Patterns of Realism, by Roy Armes (The Tantivy Press, £5.00). A useful survey of Italian neo-realism. As well as exploring the content of films both major and minor, Mr. Armes has read the surrounding literature, and he

weaves his text together with some illuminating quotations (many of them previously untranslated). He relates neo-realism to the past and the future. It originated, he believes, in the Italian regional theatre, Verga and the French cinema of the Thirties (Carné and Feyder as much as Renoir). The influence of the American novel was marginal, he argues, yet the influence did exist: one more link between neo-realism and the French revival of the late Fifties. He throws a new light on Godard by analysing his debt to Rossellini.

In recent years neo-realism has lost its enchantment. The subject, a journalists' entity, sinks easily into unreal semantic quibbling about the nature of the real, a hazard Mr. Armes does not entirely avoid. But he does open up lines of thought when he points out how most of the films are rooted in melodrama and how they have a

good deal in common with the Italian epic movie tradition. By making such connections he opens up the field once more, recaptures an old excitement about its importance and raises some tantalising questions. In what way, for instance, was Zavattini's role as a scriptwriter different from that of Jacques Prévert? And if the neo-realists were among the first to create a directors' cinema, why do we think of Zavattini as one of its leading lights? Rossellini, De Sica and Visconti have the lion's share of the book, understandably, but Mr. Armes also revives interest in the contributions of Vergano, Lizzani, Lattuada, De Santis and others. He demonstrates, perhaps surprisingly, how many of these directors were drawn to the subject of agrarian reform and of the South; in this sense De Sica and Rossellini were unusual in their choice of themes.—ERIC RHODE

Letters

'King Kong' at the N.F.T.

SIR,—The National Film Theatre included *King Kong* in the recent Great Screenwriters season, attributing it to Edgar Wallace.

I liked Edgar Wallace very much in the short time I knew him in Hollywood. I can only quote from his book *My Hollywood Diary*, page 170, Jan. 6th, 1932. 'The next month or two are very important to me. If this big film gets over that Cooper is doing, it's going to make a big difference to me, for although I am not responsible for the success of the picture, and really can't be, since the ideas were mainly Cooper's, I shall get all the credit for authorship and invention which rightly belong to him.'

Edgar Wallace died almost exactly one month later. I used not a single idea from him in the motion picture *King Kong*, but used his name because I had promised to do so. If Edgar Wallace were alive I feel sure—as he was a fair-minded man—that he would be the first to say that not one single scene, nor line of dialogue, in *King Kong* was contributed by him.

Yours faithfully,

MERIAN C. COOPER

Coronado, California.

Teenagers and the 'X'

SIR,—Myself and some friends have just been to see an 'X' film, the only trouble was we were under age. We're not the first, for 'kids' have been doing it for years.

I should think the reason for the certificate system is, or should I

say was, to stop young people from being: sexually excited or perverted, political agitators or violent. There are the weak-minded, I agree, who are attracted to what might cause trouble. I believe that this is caused more by bad education and/or a lack of interests to fill spare time. It is a known fact that 'Art', if one may label some films with this title (most are 'X's), reflects the society it thrives in, and society today is a 'tug-of-war' between the remaining Old Establishment and the new young ideals.

I see no reason why the following system should not be introduced: 'U'—Universal, 'A'—for anybody over 15, there being no other certificate. Thus such films as *Danish Blue* and *Soldier Blue* could be (remembering the prudish county censors), or would be shown as they have been in the 'X' form. Reasons for this system are as follows:

(1) Many, not all, cinemas have for some time had little discrimination over the age of persons that they admit.

(2) School film clubs show at least one 'X' to seven of another certificate. Age of viewers 13-18.

(3a) The age for marriage (with parents' consent) at 16. One is allowed a certain amount of sex-life but cannot go to an 'X'. The argument is there.

(3b) Children learn the facts of life around the age of 9, and are physically and mentally mature by 15.

(4) Sex and violence, in varying degrees, in books, plays and TV; not to mention the world around us.

(5) Swearing is more commonplace. The certificate for *La Guerre des Boutons* seems ridiculous these days.

(6) At this age most children are in public schools, or have left school. Thus picking up practical or theoretical knowledge. The intellect of children is higher than before, but of course being children they still act their age.

(7) Another interesting factor is the content of some of the 'X' films released in 1971, such as *Deep End*, *Friends* and *Summer of '42*. They are all about the same subject, and the point to notice is that the main characters are of the average age of fifteen.

Take it as you like it, the certificate system is a show of shallow-mindedness and is also taken as an insult by teenagers of the present society.

Yours faithfully,

C. C. FITCHETT

Oxshott, Surrey.

Bernard Herrmann

SIR,—'Music essentially provides an unconscious series of anchors for the viewer,' says Bernard Herrmann (my italics) in 'The Colour of the Music' (Winter 1971/72), and thus comes near to contradicting some of his comments to Ted Gilling and to repudiating statements he has made elsewhere. For example, on BBC TV: 'Whether the music should be noticed... to be noticed too much, it's like being aware of camera tricks, and not to be noticed at all means that it's just mundane.'

However, if Bernard Herrmann modestly has in mind his own genius in fusing images and sound, it is easy to understand the sort of persuasive achievement to which he alludes. His lightly scored, unemphatic 'Memory Waltz' in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* is a classic example of 'making the film go forward'. Conventional shots of Paris are shown with Gregory Peck's 'voice-over', and Peck's and Ava Gardner's stand-ins are fleetingly seen in long-shot; but it is the sensitive, delicate music that provides the nostalgia, retrospective wisdom and sad awareness that 'it had been good there'. I suspect that Mr. Herrmann may be in error about *Kilimanjaro*, since my own memory tells me that within the film itself, at the height of Harry Street's fever, there are definite references to motifs explored more fully in one of the

most electrifying main-titles ever heard in the cinema.

Mr. Herrmann's reticence about Hitchcock is understandable; their collaboration, as appropriate as hot-dogs and mustard, is arguably the finest example of a composer-director relationship, and its termination was sad indeed. An interesting footnote to that collaboration is Mr. Herrmann's own recent recordings of his Hitchcock music. Illuminating in many ways, they illustrate particularly well how a composer's thoughts can be governed or even restricted by the demands of a film. Timing kept Newman, who could be an incredibly self-indulgent conductor of his own work, up to the mark. But Bernard Herrmann's latest recordings, notably of a *Marnie* segment, suggest that he may prefer more spacious and, for some of us, more fitting tempi than the exigencies of the medium sometimes allow.

Yours faithfully,

LIONEL GODFREY

Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

Top Ten

SIR,—No doubt you'll be receiving several hundred lists like this one. None the less—herewith my list of The Ten Films Most Unfairly Neglected By Critics Choosing Their Top Ten Films in 1972: *Yojimbo*, *Le Jour se Lève*, *The Big Sleep*, *La Ronde* (Ophüls), *The Bank Dick*, *Metropolis*, *Freaks*, *The Pawnbroker*, *Alexander Nevsky*, *Strangers on a Train*.

I'm also tempted to compile a list of The Ten Most Overrated Monumentally Boring Films of All Time, headed by *The Passion of Joan of Arc* and *Mother*... but why cause trouble?

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP KEMP

London, S.W.3.

Traffic

SIR,—I somewhat resent Mr. Andrews' opinion in his review of *Traffic* (Winter issue) that

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After a successful showing of Haanstra's *The Human Dutch* at the Edinburgh Festival, I was told by a British critic that in his opinion 'Haanstra never laughs at people, but *with* people,' a much better judgment, I think, than the one expressed by Mr. Andrews. In all his films (except, maybe, a short sequence in *Zoo*), Haanstra allows his persons all their dignity. He does not film 'behaviouristic lows' but observes and films minor and very human occurrences, often mini-dramas that can be observed by everyone but are not.

Yours faithfully,

G. J. VAN DER MOLEN
The Hague, Holland.

The Marx Brothers

SIR,—I am preparing a thesis on the Marx Brothers at the Royal College of Art, taking in their whole career from vaudeville through Broadway

to Hollywood, and I am anxious to locate any original scripts of their films that may be perused or photocopied. It's proving difficult too to set down clearly their stage work, both in the States and in England: theatre programmes and good memories would perhaps help here. Can any of your readers help me in this? I would be most grateful.

Yours faithfully,

GEOFFREY BROWN

22 Evelyn Gardens,
London, S.W.7.

Our Village Film

We have been asked by the Principal of Colchester Technical College and School of Art to make clear that none of the College's students took part in filming an orgy at Layer Marney for Pasolini's *I Racconti di Canterbury* (SIGHT AND SOUND, Winter 1971/72). David Robinson points out that there was possibly not even an orgy: he only reported the talk among the optimistic extras taking part in the Coggeshall filming.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JUDY ADAMSON taught English Literature at Loyola College in Montreal and is at present at the University of Montreal, finishing a doctoral thesis on Graham Greene's film work in its various aspects. . . JOHN LINDSAY BROWN is Assistant Director of the Scottish Film Council in Glasgow. . . JAMES PAUL GAY is an American filmmaker and critic at present working in Stockholm. . . NEVILLE HUNNINGS, author of the book *Film Censors and the Law*, is Senior Research Officer at the British Institute of International and Comparative Law and the editor of *Common Market Law Reports*. . . MARI KUTTNA is a journalist and film critic who revisits Hungary regularly. At present, she is working on a book about Hungarian animation. . . BERNARD WEINER was editor of *Northwest Passage* in the Pacific Northwest, has contributed to *Film Quarterly*, and is film critic of the San Francisco *Fault*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COLUMBIA-WARNER for *The Last Picture Show*, *Macbeth*, *Dirty Harry*, *Kluge*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *What's Up, Doc?*. MGM-EMI for *The Boy Friend*. 20th CENTURY-FOX for *Un Soir . . . un Train*. UNITED ARTISTS for *The Graduate*. UNITED ARTISTS/BLACK INK FILMS for *Modern Times*. AVCO EMBASSY for *Carnal Knowledge*. RKO-RADIO PICTURES/NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Citizen Kane*. THE OTHER CINEMA for *Punishment Park*. LIONS GATE FILMS/HEMDALE for *Images*. COLUMBIA PICTURES for *The Widower*. HAWK FILMS/COLUMBIA-WARNER for *A Clockwork Orange*.

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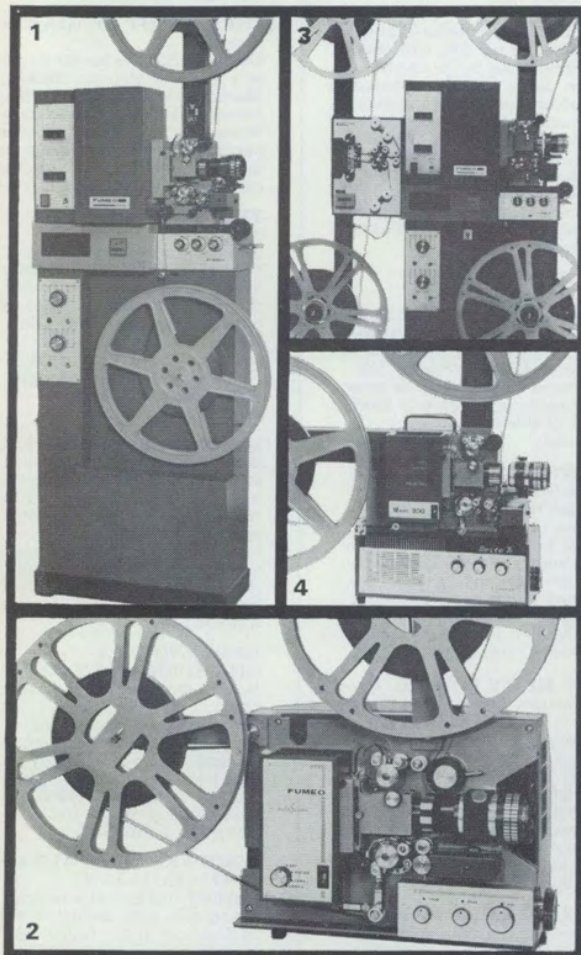
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FILM GUIDE

*ADVENTURES OF GOOPY AND BAGHA, THE

(Contemporary)

Satyajit Ray's excursion into legend and fairy-tale suffers from over-stressed playing and feeble special effects, yet has many moments of charm and satire when the wizards and spells take over. Witty decor, and music by the director. (Tapan Chatterjee, Santosh Dutta.)

*BOOKSELLER WHO GAVE UP BATHING, THE

(Peter Darvill Associates)

Enchanting and funny first film by Jarl Kulle about an ageing bachelor's Indian summer of romance and the rude collapse of his Eden when his beloved turns out to be a whore. Reminiscent of Menzel's *Capricious Summer* in its tone of nostalgic melancholy. (Allan Edwall, Margareta Krook, Jarl Kulle.)

**BOUCHER, LE

(Connoisseur)

Chabrol's splendid study of a murder case in a French provincial landscape, and the relationship between the lonely butcher and the schoolmistress. Hitchcockian, of course; but by now it's more than enough to say Chabrol. (Jean Yanne, Stéphane Audran.)

BOY FRIEND, THE

(MGM-EMI)

Ken Russell's latest, in which a seaside company's ruthlessly gayed production of Sandy Wilson's show is made the launching pad for pastiche Busby Berkeley extravaganza. An appealingly straight and simple performance by Twiggy, while styles collide all around her. (Max Adrian, Christopher Gable.) Reviewed.

COWBOYS, THE

(Columbia-Warner)

Big John Wayne in charge of eleven small boys on a junior cattle drive. All is sweetness and light and boy scout homily until Bruce Dern's hippie rustler turns nasty, saddle leather runs with blood, and *True Grit* boy's paper adventure jolts into a miscalculated *Lord of the Flies* in Colorado. (Roscoe Lee Browne; director, Mark Rydell.)

*DECAMERON, THE

(United Artists)

Pasolini's entertaining version of Boccaccio's Neapolitan tales, linked by himself as Giotto. In his own words 'earthy, frolicsome, crowded with people and full of light', and like a medieval canvas in its colourful delineation of the social pecking order. (Franco Citti, Ninetto Davoli, Angela Luce.) Reviewed.

*DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

(United Artists)

Timely return to form by ooy, still in pursuit of the indomitable Blofeld, who this time is machinating in duplicate from the top of a Las Vegas skyscraper. Active, expensive, more absurd than ever and just about the best Bond since *Goldfinger*. (Sean Connery, Jill St. John; director, Guy Hamilton.)

*DYNAMITE MAN FROM GLORY JAIL

(Columbia-Warner)

Adaptation of a Davis Grubb

novel, in which James Stewart plays an aged ex-convict trying to cash a cheque for his prison earnings, and hunted by a madly vengeful jail guard. Misses all the stylised obsession of *Night of the Hunter*, but it has its moments. (George Kennedy, Anne Baxter; director, Andrew V. McLaglen.)

EMBASSY

(Hemdale)

Erratically paced, poorly scripted thick-ear stuff about the repercussions of a Russian diplomat's request for political asylum in an American embassy. When it moves, it moves, thanks to stylish action direction by Gordon Hessler; otherwise there's only a scene-stealing performance from Broderick Crawford. (Max von Sydow, Richard Roundtree, Chuck Connors.)

*FRENCH CONNECTION, THE

(Fox)

Deglamorised view of New York police in action against incoming drug traffic. Virtuoso-location shooting (especially in big chase scene) and coldly malevolent portrait of cop by Gene Hackman; but despite the modern trimmings it is basically imitation Hathaway of the Forties. (Roy Schneider, Fernando Rey; director, William Friedkin.)

GANG THAT COULDN'T SHOOT STRAIGHT, THE

(MGM-EMI)

Lots of ideas, visual and verbal, in this crazy-black-romantic comedy about a takeover bid in New York's Italian underworld as incompetent young hoods try to oust the impotent old Mafia. Unfortunately, with a director who rarely shoots straight and never times right, most of the gags misfire. (Jerry Orbach, Leigh Taylor-Young, Jo Van Fleet; director, James Goldstone.)

*GOIN' DOWN THE ROAD

(Contemporary)

Gloomy Canadian film, *cinéma-vérité* in style, about two not so young small town drifters whose dream of the big time in the big city is soured by the yawning gap between making it and making ends meet. Occasionally illuminating in its ironic glances at large hopes and small realities, but mostly predictable. (Doug McGrath, Paul Bradley; director, Donald Shebib.)

*HOSPITAL, THE

(United Artists)

Alternating black comedy with philosophical schmaltz, Paddy Chayefsky's garrulous script uses some hilarious blunders in a streamlined medical establishment as a heavy parable for modern inadequacies. Arthur Hiller's direction plods, and the players have to switch gears with the script. (George C. Scott, Diana Rigg.)

*KOTCH

(Cinerama)

Jack Lemmon's directorial debut stars magnificent Walter Matthau as garrulous old grandfather who befriends pregnant baby-sitter. Despite sentimental family drama clichés, Lemmon's plain yet feeling direction and Matthau's wittily detailed playing make it an enjoyable experience. (Deborah Winters, Felicia Farr.) Reviewed.

*LADY FROM CONSTANTINOPLE, THE

(Academy/Connoisseur)

Beautifully observed, quiet-toned portrait of a brightly old lady changing flats in an over-crowded Budapest. Effectively low key direction, and a splendid performance by Manyi Kiss, cherishing nostalgia for a romantic, leisurely past as she happily adapts to an age with no time for memories. (Director, Judit Elek.)

**LAST PICTURE SHOW, THE

(Columbia-Warner)

Peter Bogdanovich blends the fading hopes of his teenage

characters and the receding memories of their parents with his own unintrusive nostalgia in a brilliant evocation of Fifties life in a declining Texas town. Elegiacally photographed in black and white by Robert Surtees, and impeccably acted. (Ben Johnson, Timothy Bottoms, Cloris Leachman.) Reviewed.

LOVE MACHINE, THE

(Columbia-Warner)

Monumentally ludicrous screen version of Jacqueline Susann's best-selling exposé of sex games and boardroom politics in a national television network. The script is littered with inanities, but not everyone seems to have noticed. (John Phillip Law, Dyan Cannon, Robert Ryan; director, Jack Haley, Jr.)

**MACBETH

(Columbia-Warner)

The Polanski version, with text intelligently cut by Kenneth Tynan. Stray new ideas (including a turncoat Ross) are interesting, and visually the film veers between the mainly magnificent (*Macbeth's* castle; the witches on the beach) and the occasionally silly (the levitating dagger). Verbally, it plods somewhat. (Jon Finch, Francesca Annis, Martin Shaw.) Reviewed.

**MODERN TIMES

(Black Ink Films)

First London showing for almost twenty years of Chaplin's 1936 classic, now looking more timeless than ever. Charlie remains 'the best damn ballet-dancer of them all', inhabiting a curiously lonely world. (Paulette Goddard.) Reviewed.

NIGHTCOMERS, THE

(Avco-Embassy)

Michael Winner's misguided attempt to provide a prologue to *The Turn of the Screw*. Much artful suggestion in the shadows, but little conviction despite two alarmingly precocious innocents and an eye-rolling Irish Quint from Marlon Brando. (Stephanie Beacham, Thora Hird.)

**PLAY MISTY FOR ME

(Rank)

A pleasantly Forties-style thriller about a disc jockey (Clint Eastwood), a mysterious caller (Jessica Walter) who badgers him to play her favourite tune, and the nightmare of jealous possessiveness that follows their first encounter. Engagingly unassuming debut as director for Clint Eastwood. (Donna Mills, Don Siegel.)

PLAZA SUITE

(Paramount)

Depressingly faithful adaptation of Neil Simon's comic trilogy. Not even the irreproachable Walter Matthau, in three roles and as many coloured rinses, can lift it out of its stagebound rut. (Maureen Stapleton, Lee Grant; director, Arthur Hiller.)

**PUNISHMENT PARK

(Other Cinema)

Another strident Peter Watkins allegory for the here and now, set in tomorrow's America where dissent is rewarded with prison or a futile desert assault course. The voice is loud and urgent, though doubts persist about the general credibility. (Jim Bohan, Stan Armsted, Gladys Golden.) Reviewed.

**ROLLER DERBY

(Cinerama)

Fascinating documentary about a symbolically brutal American sport. Robert Kaylor vividly outlines the bleak prospects of America's Midwest as he follows an aspiring skater from tract home to factory bench to roller rink.

SUCH GOOD FRIENDS

(Paramount)

Bizarre Preminger film which glows with significance but seems to have forgotten to enclose the message. Vaguely barbed satirical

jabs at intellectual pretension, social vapidity, medical incompetence and sexual hypocrisy nestle uncomfortably round the hospital bed of a healthy man who is gradually killed by his doctors while his wife discovers that he was anything but a devoted husband. (Dyan Cannon, James Coco.)

**TERRA EM TRANSE

(Other Cinema)

Glauber Rocha's third film, banned in its own country until international protest got it screened. A searing critique of the corruption of the power elite and exploitation of the masses, with several hundred years of Brazilian politics compressed into a hundred minutes of burning rage. (José Lewgoy, Jardel Filho.)

**THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

(Rank)

George C. Scott as lawyer who thinks he's Sherlock Holmes, tracking his Moriarty through New York with Joanne Woodward's psychiatrist Watson. A most engaging oddity, perceptive and beautifully played, though in this version also cruelly cut. (Director, Anthony Harvey.)

TROJAN WOMEN, THE

(Cinerama)

Another Cacoyannis version of Euripides, and another awkward hybrid of film and theatre with the camera alternately static and busily interpreting. Katharine Hepburn nobly rises to the occasion, but only Irene Papas' Helen survives the piecemeal style. (Vanessa Redgrave, Genevieve Bujold.)

*UNDER MILK WOOD

(Rank)

Brave but unsuccessful version of Dylan Thomas' play for voices (and there's the rub), in which a literal image-for-word approach mostly defeats imagination. Some of the poetry survives, but little of the spirit. (Richard Burton, Peter O'Toole, Sian Phillips; director, Andrew Sinclair.)

**WEEKEND OF A CHAMPION

(MGM-EMI)

Behind the scenes at the Monte Carlo Grand Prix, with Roman Polanski shadowing world champion Jackie Stewart through hopes, frustrations and final triumph. Some intriguing close-up glimpses of the racing circus on and off the track. (Director, Frank Simon.)

WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?

(MGM-EMI)

Playfully updated Hansel and Gretel tale, with Shelley Winters in florid cry as the widow who keeps her dead daughter, *Psycho*-style, in the nursery. But mostly a tame let-down after *What's the Matter with Helen?* (Ralph Richardson, Mark Lester; director, Curtis Harrington.)

WHO IS HARRY KELLERMAN AND WHY IS HE SAYING THOSE TERRIBLE THINGS ABOUT ME?

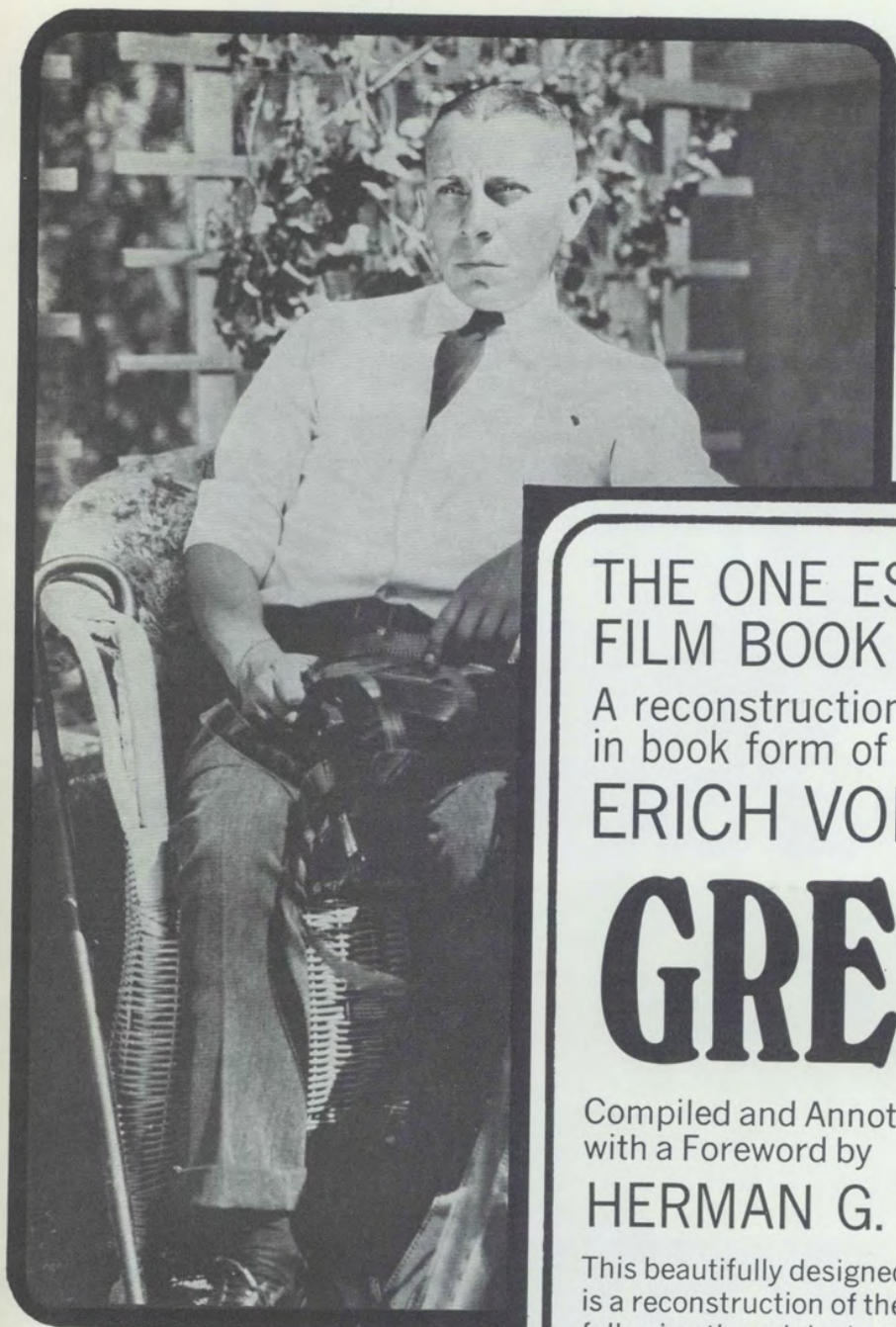
(Fox)

Dustin Hoffman as a pop composer shunted between nutty psychiatrist and ubiquitous *alter ego*. An untidy mess of frantic farce and would-be significant comment on the yawning void behind the facade of a modern success story. (Jack Warden, Barbara Harris; director, Ulu Grosbard.)

ZEE AND CO

(Columbia-Warner)

Poor man's *Sunday*, *Bloody Sunday* with Michael Caine trapped between the perverse sexual drives of tigerish wife (Elizabeth Taylor, busily carpet-chewing) and soulful mistress (Susannah York, dispensing soul). The first ten quite witty minutes exhaust the script, leaving the rest high, dry and banal. (Margaret Leighton, John Standing; director, Brian G. Hutton.)



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